Rock Classics

IRON MAIDEN

SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION

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IRON MAIDEN Rock Classics

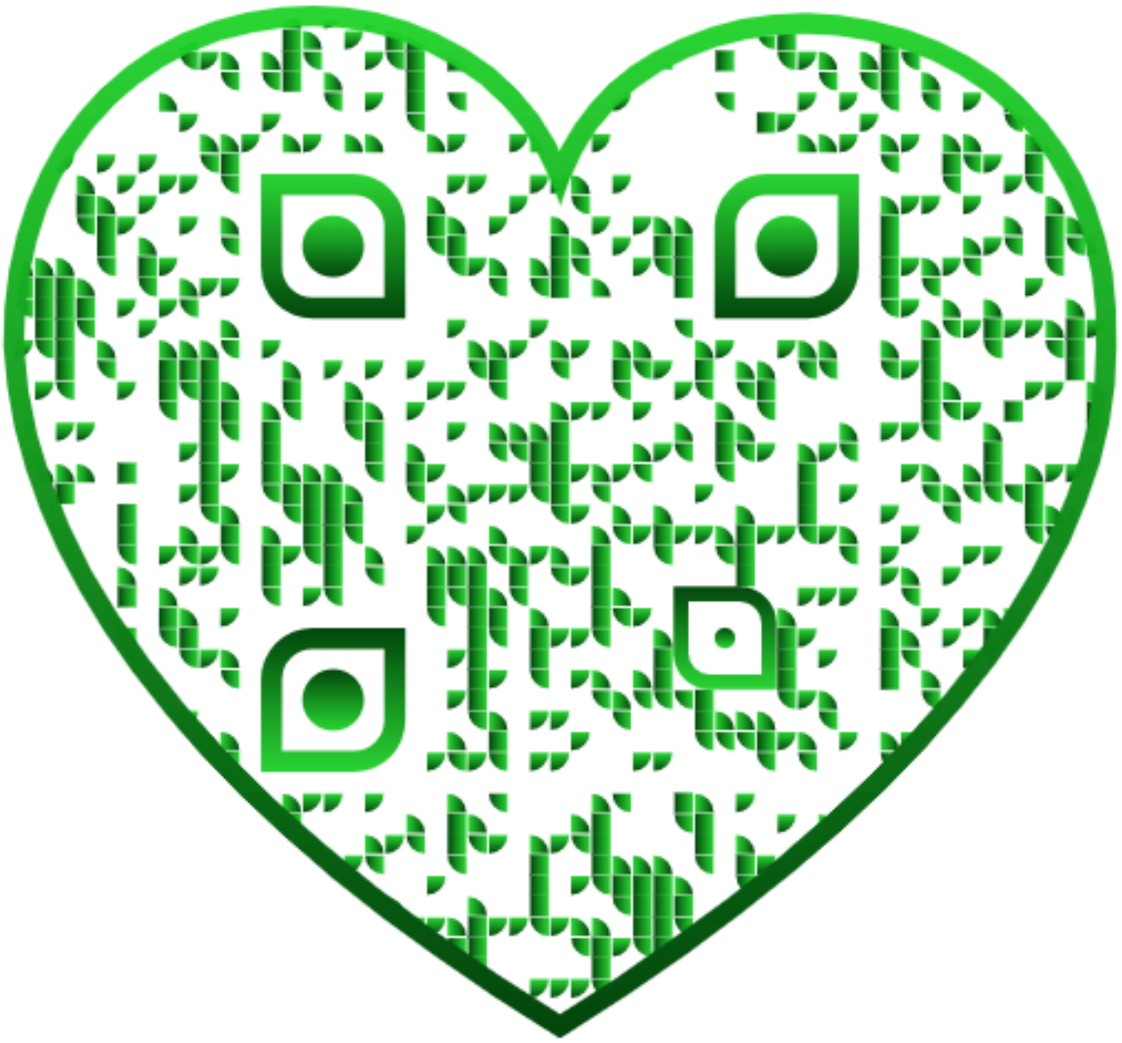

Photo: John McMurtrie

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

"They dared to go
Where no one would try
They chose to fly
Where eagles dare"
("Where Eagles Dare", 1983)

The Christmas period marks a special time of remembrance for metal fans all over the world. Not only do we rejoice over the birth of the illustrious Lemmy Kilmister on Christmas Eve, the very following day, 25 December, we can recall Steve Harris laying the foundation stones for the band that has been heralded as heavy metal royalty ever since its formation in 1975. What the then only nineteen-year-old Harris could not have envisioned is that 46 years later, IRON MAIDEN still stands amongst the greatest bands ever to roam our beautiful planet. All generations alive today, young or old, metalhead or not, all have without a doubt heard of the British giants. Their iconic sound is immediately recognizable, as is their band logo and their "pretty" mascot. No one will disagree that the heart and soul of IRON MAIDEN is synonymous with heavy metal itself. And just in case you need more reason to celebrate this year, the second IRON MAIDEN album "Killers" observes its 40th birthday in 2021!

"The Book Of Souls" was published in 2015 and marks IRON MAIDEN's 16th and so far last studio album. To commemorate its release, we conducted a very long, personal and detailed interview with singer, aviator, actor, fencing master and author Bruce Dickinson, which we are so excited to finally publish. But we wanted to go further. We want to tell you the story of this very special band and trace the creation process of their impressive album catalogue as well as follow Bruce Dickinson through his solo career. To give you an insight into what you need as a true Maiden head we will also walk you through some of the best books, films, vinyl rarities and collectibles available. To round it off and present you with a true document of contemporary history, we have included brand new and exclusive interviews with Maiden's original front man, the one and only "my voice is too powerful" Paul Di'Anno as well as legendary roadie Steve "Loopy" Newhouse. Your journey through the IRON MAIDEN universe starts here, and it is not going to be boring at all!

Enjoy this essential guide and "Up The Irons"!

Thomas "Aces High" Sulzbacher
Editor-In-Chief

Photo: Warner

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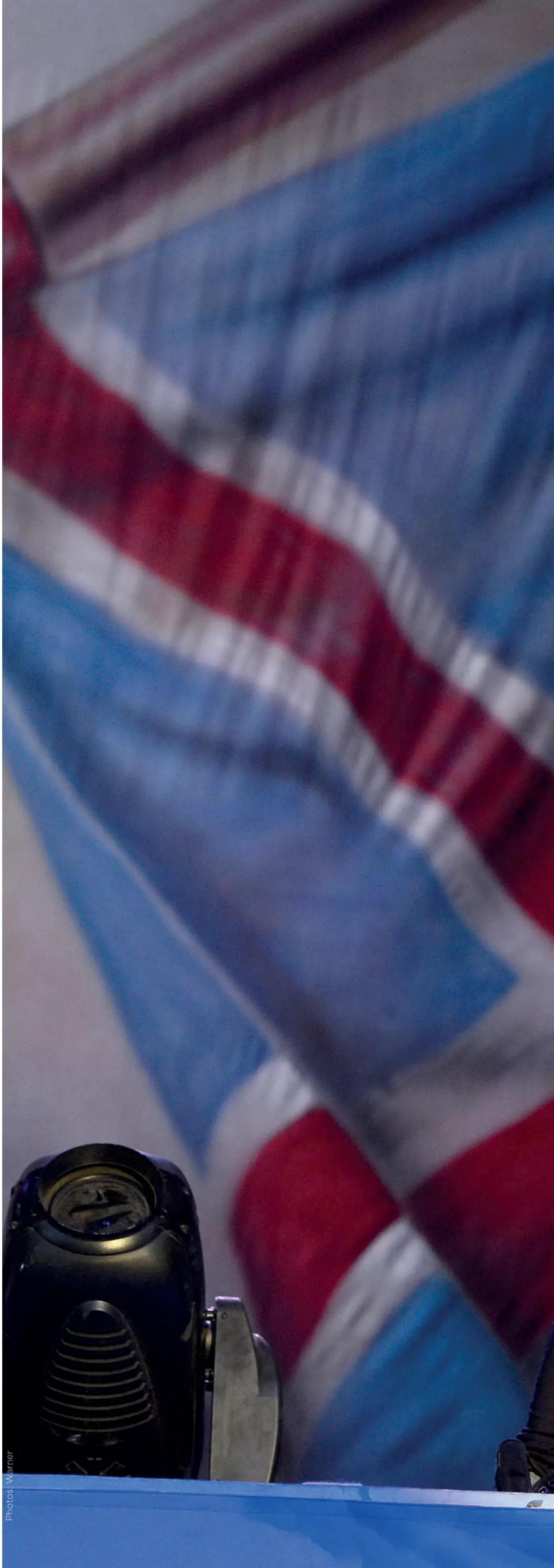


Photos: Warner

iron maiden 1975-1979

It is undisputed that the United Kingdom is the birthplace of heavy metal. When Tony Iommi first tuned his guitar down lower than had ever been tried before, in a mere attempt to relieve his injured fingertips at the time, he unknowingly gave birth to a sound that heavy metal enthusiasts would get enticed by for generations to come. BLACK SABBATH's 1971 album "Master Of Reality" was the defining soundtrack for this new revolutionary movement. In equal measure we can look back at hard rock classics such as "IV" by LED ZEPPELIN and DEEP PURPLE's "Machine Head" as guiding stars for the emerging genre. This "(un)holy trinity" not only generated an unprecedented appeal among a new audience, it also gave testament to the diversity and complexity encapsulated by heavy metal music. While Iommi continued to be the reference for sledgehammer riffs, LED ZEPPELIN excelled with bluesy experiments, and DEEP PURPLE convinced with instrumental high wire tightrope acts. Together, they were the unchallenged front-liners of the genre until 1975, when the great extinction of the "dinosaurs of rock" began to take effect.

All three bands found themselves exhausted artistically and towards the end of the 1970's, critics and audiences placed them in an artificial coma. On the British Isles, the emerging punk and new wave movements took all commercial success. The reduced and minimalist sound of THE SEX PISTOLS, THE CLASH, THE DAMNED, RAMONES and THE STRANGLERS garnering the affection of punters instead. Gone were the days of legendary guitar heroes, that with sheer skill, trumped awe-inspiring virtuosity into popular minds of many. As record companies adjusted to the new scene, a countermovement developed in the underbelly of the pub circuits. This new movement adopted not only the straightforward swing of punk, but more importantly hearkened back to pure instrumental craftsmanship. Hardly any other band embraced and mastered all contemporary disciplines like IRON MAIDEN would. As such, they were front and centre in what would be known as the "New Wave of British Heavy Metal" (NWOBHM).

Steven Percy Harris was born on 12 March 1956 in Leytonstone, a small suburb in East London. Little known fact, he shared his birthplace with Alfred Hitchcock and David Beckham who were also born in Leytonstone. Before venturing into music, the young Harris was also contemplating a professional football career. But after picking up the bass guitar in 1971 he rejected the offer to train with West Ham United's Youth Academy in favour of forming his first band. Like many aspiring rock stars, he

first pursued fame by covering the work of others such as hits by FREE and DEEP PURPLE. There are even local anecdotes of "Smoke On The Water" emanating from his spartanly furnished childhood bedroom. Harris later clarified that "Foxtrot" by GENESIS (1972) and "Stand Up" by JETHRO TULL (1969) also played a major influencing role while developing his style. According to biographer Mick Wall, NEKTAR's "Recycled" (1975) was later to also become a fixture in the fledgling bassist's all-time favourites.

Harris was a very good student, obtaining four GCE O-levels, but nevertheless dropped out of school at the young age of sixteen. After a short stint as a draughtsman, he found himself in a downward spiral which even saw him hold a job as a street sweeper and later a waste management worker. Luckily, these setbacks were only temporary because young Harris continued to have his eye on music. He first ventured onto the stage with INFLUNCE, a local cover band that was renamed GYPSY'S KISS after a few rehearsals. His first song, "Burning Ambition", stems from those early rehearsing days. An evolved, more mature version of that song would eventually find itself on the B-side of IRON MAIDEN's first single, "Running Free".

His dynamic stage presence saw influences of Pete Way (UFO). His striking and increasingly original bass lines resembled a lot of Geezer Butler (BLACK SABBATH). He was after all a defining role model. In 1974, Harris switched to the band SMILER, which drew its influence musically by WISHBONE ASH. There he met drummer Doug Sampson and singer Dennis Wilcock, both of whom were to accompany him for a long time. Harris's colleagues were overwhelmed by his compositions and talent at the time, though finding his work to be too complex and tricky. In 1975, he took off from SMILER with an early sketch of the Maiden track "Innocent Exile" in hand and a reinvigorated determination to start his own band.

On 25 December 1975, the foundation stone was laid for IRON MAIDEN. The very first line-up consisted of Harris, singer Paul Mario Day, guitarists Terry Rance and Dave Sullivan and with Ron Matthews on drums. The band quickly agreed on IRON MAIDEN as a name which was proposed by Harris through his affinity to the movie "The Man With The Iron Mask". Harris had a knack for movies, an interest that was nurtured by his family.

Interestingly, punk was always a red flag for Harris. He later explained that he couldn't find anything admirable about a style of music that featured stage shows portraying musicians spitting on each other. He built IRON MAIDEN as an antidote to that trend, fully knowing how many great rock bands that tried the same had to give way to the punk movement. Former SMILER singer Dennis Wilcock joined the group, replacing Day almost immediately after the band's founding. As well as being influenced by ALICE COOPER, he was a self-confessed KISS fanatic. Wilcock would dress up as Paul Stanley for his stage appearances, using a red painted star over his right eye instead. He also worshiped Gene Simmons, which inspired him to experiment with stage blood. Wilcock almost certainly introduced the theatrical element to early Maiden, sometimes even striding across the stage with a cape to emulate a vampire.

As with SMILER, Harris built the new band on the basic idea of having two guitarists. LED ZEPPELIN, DEEP PURPLE and BLACK SABBATH all had only one guitarist each. The first notable example of the power of duelling instruments had come from DEEP PURPLE, when in true concert spirit, Jon Lord turned his Hammond organ into a quasi-guitar with the help of effect pedals and distortion, taking turns with Ritchie Blackmore to showcase virtuoso soloing. But even long before that, there had been a transition phase in 1966 in THE YARDBIRDS, the nucleus for LED ZEPPELIN, in which Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck had both wielded the six-string simultaneously. In 1970, Eric Clapton, that formation's founding guitarist, continued to develop the twin guitar tandem technique with DEREK AND THE DOMINOS. Their record "Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs" remained their only album ever released and featured Duane Allman played side by side with Clapton, not only supporting him by acting as the perfect foil, but also pushing him to perform at his very best. The lord only knows how far Allman could have taken the concept of duelling string wizards in THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND had he not had the tragic motorcycle accident that saw him killed in 1971.

Ultimately, WISHBONE ASH and THIN LIZZY ended up being the primary influencers for the young British bands of the early 1970's experimenting with two guitarists. The former released their trend-setting album "Argus" in 1972, inspiring many of the youngsters of that time, incidentally, produced by long-time IRON MAIDEN and DEEP PURPLE producer Martin Birch at the helm. In 1976 THIN LIZZY, in turn, caused a sensation with "Jailbreak" featuring their twin guitarist setup Scott Gorham and Brian Robertson. Least we not forget, we can't finish this history lesson without JUDAS PRIEST and SCORPIONS, who were also always blessed with two gifted guitarists respectively, also receiving an honorary mention here.

Meanwhile, back at IRON MAIDEN, a third guitarist, Dave Murray, joined the band shortly after its founding. The now complete formation momentarily resembled LYNYRD SKYNYRD, who were the only other act featuring a three-pronged guitar attack. They caused a sensation in 1974 with the album "Second Helping" which interestingly foreshadowed IRON MAIDEN's own three-guitar setup as of 1999.

David Michael Murray was born on 23 December 1956 in Edmonton, London. As the offspring of a family mired in poverty, he was often bullied at school and became accustomed to bruises hard knocks, initially causing him to pursue a career as a skinhead. He took his first musical steps with STONE FREE, where he played with his childhood friend Adrian Smith, who was still trying to make his mark as a singer at that time, and who only later picked up the guitar.

Dave's entry into the band was unfortunately met with immediate conflict. The two original guitarists were perturbed by his hiring, so Harris simply dissolved the band in the spur of the moment, only to start it again immediately with Murray as the sole guitarist. Murray's partner on guitar would temporarily be Bob Sawyer, who also only had a short stay. More drama ensued. The contentious Wilcock temporarily banished Murray from the group. Murray simply used the time away as an opportunity to play with Adrian Smith again in URCHIN. In the search yet again for a new guitarist, IRON MAIDEN ended up with Terry Wapram, but who ultimately failed to convince the band. The saga concluded with Murray being brought back once again, and Wapram being released shortly thereafter.

For a short while, the band even featured a keyboardist, Tony Moore, albeit only for one gig, causing Harris to decide that keyboards would compromise the heavy sound he was looking to develop. Meanwhile, Barry Purkis, later known under the pseudonym Thunderstick, briefly took up residence behind the drums, but was replaced by former SMILER drummer Doug Sampson and left to join rival NWOBHM band SAMSON (a band which would later feature one Paul Bruce Dickinson!). In true rock-band tradition, the IRON MAIDEN personnel carousel spun faster and faster, throwing off guitarists Paul Todd and Paul Cairns in the process, who had performed unimpressively by comparison to Dave Murray. Finally, Dennis Wilcock was also shown the door due to his constant prima donna outbursts which were poisoning the band's climate.

With the inimitable Paul Di'Anno, the band finally found a highly charismatic front man who was not constantly looking for a fight (with his fellow band members, at least, everyone else was a different matter). Di'Anno was born Paul Andrews on 17 May 1958 in Chingford, London. Prior to IRON MAIDEN, he had been involved with FEEDBACK, BIRD OF PREY, and ROCK CANDY, and may have impressed Doug Sampson at some point, who suggested Di'Anno to Steve Harris as IRON

Photo: Warner

MAIDEN's new singer. Di'Anno's Jack-the-lad attitude and easy charm endeared him to punters and pub regulars, solving an essential piece of the IRON MAIDEN puzzle. Apart from the vacant position for second guitar, the addition of Di'Anno sealed the first solid line-up of IRON MAIDEN.

The milestone to achieve on IRON MAIDEN's path to fame would be to replicate their strength on stage in the studio. This required polished studio techniques, a solid set of demos to present to concert organisers and promoters as well as flawless recording techniques. The band therefore booked Spaceward Studios, Cambridge on 31 December 1978. Having the studio to themselves on New Year's Eve and at a cheaper rate than usual, they recorded four tracks: "Prowler", "Invasion", "Iron Maiden" and "Strange World". A few years ago, guitarist Paul Cairns claimed that he also played on these first recording sessions without receiving any credits. Then-IRON MAIDEN roadie Steve "Loopy" Newhouse corroborates that he thinks he remembers Cairns there, and there are also other indications, including a photo of the band with Cairns and his dog Nelson in front of a pub near the studio. IRON MAIDEN themselves remain officially mum about this, and the line-up printed on the back of the resulting record cover remains as a quartet.

"The Soundhouse Tapes", as the EP came to be known, drew in two important personalities into the band's orbit, namely Neil Kay and Rod Smallwood. Kay was a DJ who deejayed regularly at the London Bandwagon and also had a charts column in "Sounds" magazine. He got his hands on a demo cassette of "The Soundhouse Tapes" from Harris and played the song "Prowler" repeatedly at his events. The song soon rose to #1 in his requests at the Bandwagon. Kay also helped the band by organising a concert featuring IRON MAIDEN, ANGEL WITCH and SAMSON, the three most popular young bands in his chart column. Kay also claims to have invented the expression "New Wave Of British Heavy Metal", but the jury is still out on that.

Finally, IRON MAIDEN self-published their demo on vinyl. "Strange World" ultimately did not make it onto the "The Soundhouse Tapes" EP, which was released on 9 November 1979. Limited to a mere 5000 copies and only made available to fans by post, the EP sold like hot cakes. 3000 copies were shipped in the first week alone. The band even drew the attention of a larger record company that wanted to order another 20,000 copies of the EP. However, IRON MAIDEN chose to remain true to their self-marketed credo of being a fans' band, thus making "The Soundhouse Tapes" an extremely rare and sought-after collectors' item. The writer of this article missed an opportunity in 1986 to purchase a mint copy for the equivalent of €35. Today, fans can cough up at least €1000 for a well-preserved, genuine, original copy ... (there are a number of fake copies floating around – hint: the genuine original opens from the top, not from the side).

Manager Rod Smallwood was also enthusiastic about IRON MAIDEN's first demo. Smallwood had first worked as a booker for a concert agency and had, at the time, managed STEVE HARLEY & COCKNEY REBEL as well as GLORIA MUNDI. He recognised the band's enormous potential immediately and contacted Harris to organise two gigs to showcase them. The first was cancelled, and Paul Di'Anno managed to get himself arrested before the second, leaving Steve Harris, not the greatest of singers, to handle vocals. Despite this inauspicious beginning, Smallwood agreed to manage IRON MAIDEN based on the sheer talent demonstrated by the band and

the audience's reception. Smallwood still manages them to this day with immense success. Andy Taylor became Smallwood's co-manager in 1982, handling the financial side of things and freeing Smallwood up to focus on the day-to-day management of the rapidly growing Beast.

Under Smallwood's wing, IRON MAIDEN was consequently invited by the BBC to play the Friday Rock Show Live on 14 November 1979, performing "Iron Maiden", "Running Free", "Transylvania" and "Sanctuary" as part of the prestigious gig. It featured Tony Parsons on guitar alongside Dave Murray. That historical event can be found on the 2002 release "BBC Archives" a part of the "Eddie's Archives" box set. Smallwood then cunningly negotiated with record company EMI for the rest of 1979 and was able to land IRON MAIDEN their first record deal. Furthermore, it was agreed with Neil Kay that the band would be the only band to contribute two songs, as opposed to only one for each other act, to his seminal NWOBHM sampler, "Metal for Muthas". A UK tour to promote the release was also organised. With future prospects for IRON MAIDEN looking extremely bright, the band headed straight for the studio to record their debut album. *(rp)*

Photos: Warner

"IRON MAIDEN"

1980

As 1979 came to an end, IRON MAIDEN had finally established a promising foundation for the future with the troika of Harris, Murray, and Di'Anno. In November, they had issued their legendary "The Soundhouse Tapes" EP as a quartet, and had recorded a further two songs, "Sanctuary" and "Wrathchild", for Neil Kay's legendary "Metal For Muthas" sampler. Substitute guitarist Tony Parsons failed to live up to expectations and was let go during these sessions, but the band was about to take off for good.

In search of a second guitarist, IRON MAIDEN found Dennis Stratton after Dave Murray's friend Adrian Smith turned down multiple offers to join the band, not wanting to abandon his own band URCHIN after having obtained a record deal and some initial successes. Stratton joined the band in December 1979 and managed to leave his mark on IRON MAIDEN history, even though he left less than a year later in October 1980. A little older than the rest of his new musical colleagues, Stratton was already married and had fathered a child. Musically, he had gained experience on the pub circuit with the band REMUS DOWN BOULEVARD (RDB), which had toured with STATUS QUO. But after temporarily finding the right guitar player to complement Dave Murray, it was Doug Sampson's turn to vacate the drum stool. The official reason given for Sampson's departure was that he was not resilient enough for touring life, being constantly taken ill by the rigours of the road (something confirmed by Sampson himself). On the advice of Stratton, Clive Burr joined the band instead. The more technically gifted drummer had earned his first spurs on two SAMSON singles, with future Maiden singer Bruce Dickinson ironically joining SAMSON shortly after Burr's departure.

Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

Promocard, 1980

In January 1980, the band moved into quarters at Kingsway Studios to record their self-titled debut album with sound engineer Wil Malone at the production helm. Malone had previously won accolades for arrangements he had made for BLACK SABBATH (on "Sabbath Bloody Sabbath", "Sabotage", and "Technical Ecstasy"), among others, but was described as absent-minded and disinterested during recording sessions for "Iron Maiden". The band completed work with the sound engineer anyway, and their debut was recorded and produced within 13 days. To this day, Steve Harris remains dissatisfied with the sound on the final product, but the album was hailed by contemporary critics for its dynamism and raw energy. The many comparisons with punk – ironically, given Harris's aversion to it and thus his whole impetus for starting IRON MAIDEN - stem partly from the album's somewhat Spartan production.

"Iron Maiden" hit shelves on 14 April 1980, and went straight to #4 in the UK charts, a result of the considerable groundwork the band had done in building a passionate and devoted fan base from unremitting live performances, but the success still took them by surprise. The album contains a fine mix of straightforward hard rock hand grenades: "Prowler" (musically, a hugely defining and influential track), classic single "Running Free", all-time IRON MAIDEN live standard "Iron Maiden", and "Charlotte The Harlot" (which Murray has stated was "based on a true story"). It also contains "Transylvania", an instrumental heavy metal stomper that was a rarity at that time and a bold move for a young band demonstrating their self-confidence, alongside "Strange World", an ethereal ballad, "Remember Tomorrow", an otherworldly and menacing half-ballad with deeply poetic lyrics, and the complex and progressive, first, true, IRON MAIDEN 'epic', "Phantom Of The Opera" – the first in a long line of progressive compositions that would become Harris's speciality and would come to define the band, setting them well apart from their heavy metal peers.

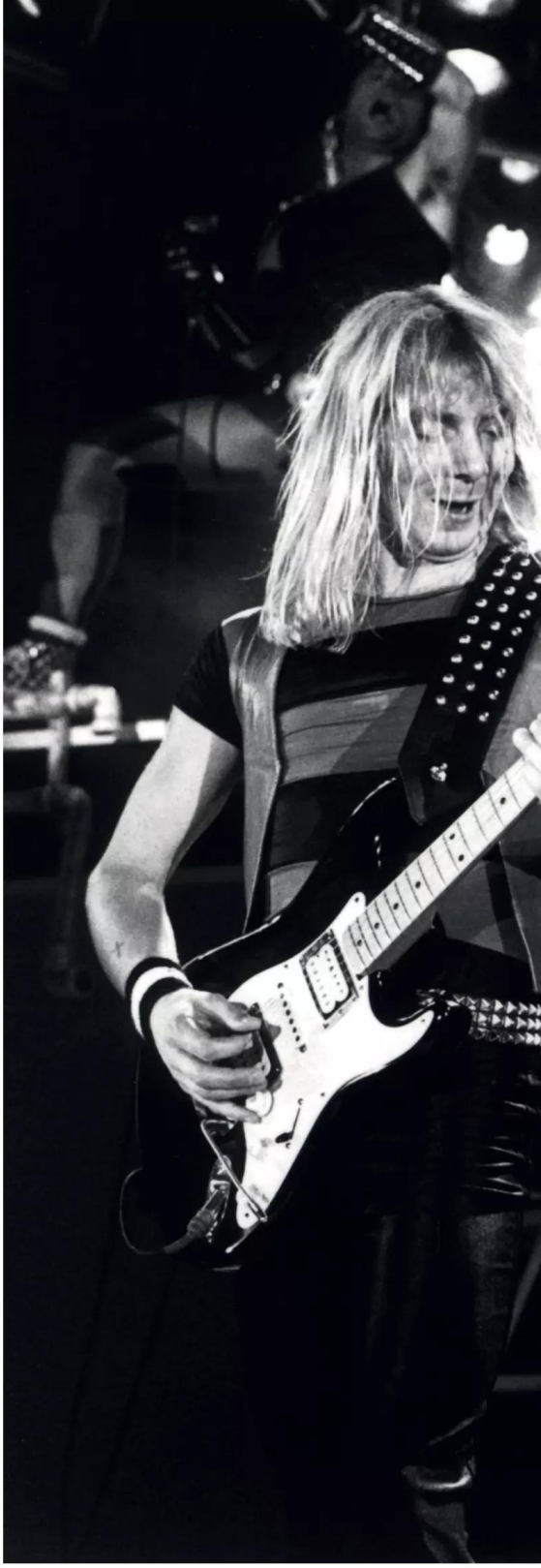
Fans in the US and Canada were also able to savour "Sanctuary", which appeared on the pressings for these countries, but not on the European releases. The song had been recorded as a non-album single specifically for the UK tour that kicked off in April 1980

TRACKLIST

1. Prowler
2. Remember Tomorrow
3. Running Free
4. Phantom Of The Opera
5. Transylvania
6. Strange World
7. Charlotte The Harlot
8. Iron Maiden

SINGLES

The Maiden theatre as a whole as it has become works to perfection – but it would not have been possible in the first place without the unique skill, voice, and attitude of prodigal son Paul Di'Anno, always lurking in the shadows of the IRON MAIDEN universe but without whose electrifying personality the band was unlikely to have made it as far as they had prior to Dickinson assuming control of the microphone.



as support for JUDAS PRIEST on their "British Steel" tour. Rumours persist to this day that the headliners were none too happy with the young upstarts trying to upstage them, and Priest guitarist K. K. Downing allegedly tried to get Maiden kicked off the tour following Di'Anno's comments in 'Sounds' magazine that "Maiden will blow the balls off Priest every night on stage". The promotional single for "Sanctuary", though, sparked controversy in Tory Britain. The cover art featured band mascot Eddie the 'Ead, fresh from having assassinated British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, aptly nicknamed "The Iron Lady" by the press due to her socially punishing right-wing policies. The poster featured her stabbed by Eddie after peeling down an IRON MAIDEN poster … fancy that for political commentary.

But the album as a whole had a more long-lasting cultural and social impact. The eponymous title track remains an integral part of IRON MAIDEN concerts and has been performed more than 2200 times, according to setlist.fm. Tradition has it that the song indicates the imminent appearance of a larger-than-life sized Eddie on stage, a staple of the IRON MAIDEN live experience, to the mirth and joy of fans. "Running Free" was the band's first single and has become an undisputed classic, taking on various iterations over the years. First, its original version, which sees co-writer Di'Anno give life to desires of breaking the chains of domesticity and convention, the thirst for freedom simmering under his trademark snarl. It is also known for its extended live version, with Di'Anno's replacement Bruce Dickinson pitting one side of the audience against the other to see who can chant the chorus the loudest. It is unquestionably immortalised most notably on the landmark "Live After Death" live album from 1985. "Remember Tomorrow" was arguably the blueprint for later ballads from the likes of METALLICA, with its quiet verses and heavy chorus and fast solo section a study in contrasts and a quasi-transcendental lunge at the otherworldly.

The undisputed album highlight "Phantom Of The Opera" was the first song to demonstrate the inherently theatrical side of IRON MAIDEN and was a foretaste of the many future epic compositions that the band would deliver over the decades to come. Based on the famous novel by French writer Gaston Leroux (and likely also based on the 1925 film depiction, in film buff Harris's case), Di'Anno takes the part of the phantom's nemesis and makes it his own. A perfect arc of tension and sophisticated dramaturgy with extensive instrumental passages, solo modules, and unconventional time changes. The song stands at over seven minutes long which, according to OVERKILL's Bobby Ellsworth, also provided the very roots of thrash metal. During recording, Harris and Stratton were at each other's throats because the latter wanted to make the song sound more like QUEEN, with additional layers of vocal harmonies. Although the idea was interesting, Harris put his foot down. He was right: the song remains uncompromising and brutal but without losing its progressive bent or emotional range, thanks to the combination of Di'Anno's unbending, raw vocals and Harris's unusual musical excursuses, setting the tone for many an IRON MAIDEN epic hence.

One thing to consider is that Di'Anno may well himself be the 'phantom' of the IRON MAIDEN opera. The Maiden theatre as a whole, as it has become, works to perfection. However, this harmony would not have been possible in the first place without the unique skills, voice, and attitude of the prodigal son. Di'anno was always the spirit lurking in the shadows of the IRON MAIDEN universe. His electrifying personality added the much-needed je ne sais quoi to the band, and it is unlikely the band would've survived prior to Dickinson assuming control of the microphone. No serious aficionado or student of IRON MAIDEN would downplay the role the wayward but brilliant vocalist had in taking the band to the top. *(rp/gl)*

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH

PAUL DI'ANNO

BEAST, SURRECTURUS SIT!

The past few years have not been kind to Paul Di'Anno, IRON MAIDEN's infamous first true vocalist. Beset by health issues, temporarily rendering him immobile, the legendary frontman still managed to release "Hell Over Waltrop", the finest live album of his career. In early 2020, we found him still in good spirits when reached out for an exclusive interview. What followed was a wide-ranging discussion spanning his storied career, IRON MAIDEN, and his ultimate ambition of returning to where he belongs: the road. The Beast shall return ...

Photo: Keith Wilfort

The most pressing question any fan would ask is how you're holding up under the circumstances. You narrowly avoided death from sepsis and I understand you are waiting for your second knee surgery after interminable complications. What's happening at the moment, and how are you holding up?
God, it's just a nightmare at the moment. Things are put on hold for surgeries. They're going to call me back from the hospital in November, and things are changing now with the bloody Covid spike again, so it's on my priority list to get my left knee done, at least, because I've got no knee in my right knee, I've got a bit of cement in there. (laughs) But it's all good fun! You've just got to get on with it. It seems to have quietened down a bit, and they might grab me and quickly do my left knee. If I can get moving again on crutches, then I can get to America, go and see my missus and my boy, and I could eventually go back on the road, to be honest with you. That's what I'd love to do.

Have you been able to work on any music in this condition and with all of this going on?
I helped AIRFORCE out on their last album, "Strike Hard", and I did a track with them before on their other album. Me and Cliff (Evans, KILLERS guitarist – ed.) have some tunes going, I'm collaborating with Chop Pitman (AIFORCE guitarist – ed.) for AIRFORCE as well, but I've sort of lost the will to write right now with all that's going on. It's really difficult to get out of the rut, it's a pain in the arse, but I'll get back to it. The thing I've been working on is my medieval studies! (laughs) I'm really into medieval history and I'm trying to get a book together. I'm not a political writer or anything so, uh ... (laughs) Everyone's done things on the Templars and all that, and I'm trying to find out about Judaic knights over in Israel.

Your latest release, the live album "Hell Over Waltrop", is a hell of a belter. Fantastically fresh, even as it was recorded in 2006. I wanted to ask you about

Photo: Warner

IRON MAIDEN with Paul Di'Anno

your voice. It has changed somewhat in texture over the years, but you still maintain a broad range, a spectrum of emotion, and remarkable control. Your voice is sometimes even stronger than when you were in IRON MAIDEN.

I think the voice is a lot stronger now. It was weaker when I was in Maiden, because I didn't know what I was doing. But then again through constant touring, it's like a muscle, you just build it up. And sometimes it's a bit hit and miss, but what do you expect when you do seven shows a week for months and months on end, all over the world? (laughs)

You've got a really interesting back catalogue, in general. Is there any chance of re-releasing the first few BATTLEZONE albums, you know with the full package, remastered, extra tracks and so on?

Yeah, we've been talking about it. I'd like to see the first album remixed as well. With the same guy, Thomas (Mergler – ed.), who I worked with in Germany. We've been talking about it. Me and him put "Hell Over Waltrop" together, and we've been talking about the BATTLEZONE stuff. He's trying to find the masters. (laughs) We don't know where they've gone! Especially with "Fighting Back", it was on Shatter records over in America and we'd done very well with that, you know, we toured America for years on that bloody record. And the second one, "Children Of Madness" as well, and then it all sort of turned into KILLERS after some contractual problems. Cliff (Evans – ed.) has the masters of the KILLERS stuff, so we'll talk about that, but with BATTLEZONE, yes, I would definitely like to, and as far as I'm concerned BATTLEZONE is not dead, we're just sleeping at the moment. (chuckles) ... I haven't lost my voice yet, thank God.

It's almost a shame you've always had to do so many IRON MAIDEN songs live because you've got so many great songs of your own that get lost between the cracks because of that.

Yes. That's because of promoters. I'm actually trying to get some old stuff in there in the future, like some old BATTLEZONE, put some "Welfare Warriors" in there, and "Voice On The Radio", and I always want to put in "The Promise" from the second album, and a few others, just sort of round it out, put a few in from KILLERS. I even get my old fans pissed at me for mostly only doing the Maiden stuff. Well look, I say, why don't you tell the promoters this? I've been fighting against it for ages. I think my songs stand up in their own bloody right. (laughs)

If you could point to the one solo album of which you're most proud, which one would it be?

That's difficult. The BATTLEZONE albums, probably. You know something, that first album I did after Maiden called "Di'Anno". We wanted to try something different, just to see what we could do. I'm quite proud of that album in a way, I think everyone was expecting me to come out with a heavy metal album, or punk, at least, and I sort of showed them all. (laughs)

"'Killers' was much smoother. But I think the songs on the first album were far superior. But I really wished we'd had that sort of production on the first album. That's what it's all about, and it didn't feel right, for me. That's when the rot started setting in and that's when I think I convinced myself that it wasn't gonna be right for me in the end, you know."

I'm glad you say that because I don't think that album has ever been released on anything besides the initial vinyl and cassette versions. It's a really fun album, as you said, totally unexpected.
Yeah, you're right. A friend of mine did a remastered version of it on CD but I don't know where that's gone. I don't have all the records I've ever recorded. (laughs) But yeah, I'm quite a fan of it. I was the only heavy metal artist at that time to have a number one record in the Japanese national charts, where they put it out with a different title.

Oh yeah, what was it, "Two Kippers And..."?
"Two Swimmers And A Bag Of Jockies". (laughs)

That's it. Again, it's a shame some of your stuff just isn't available.
Yeah, it's strange, isn't it. I've not really had a great deal of control over my career. Maybe it's my fault as well, you know, I'm in the music business, but I try to stay out of it as well.

It crossed my mind that you haven't had the best management.
Oh God, the only good manager I've ever really had was Rod Smallwood. And that was it! (laughs) As I said, I always seem to be at loggerheads with management because I won't really get involved in all the dodgy sides of the music industry. I'd rather stay on the outside of that. And I've still got the same fans, along with new ones which came on along the way. It's not so much about records nowadays. The reason I do alright is because I've got a fantastic fan base and they come to the concerts and I tour a hell of a lot. Well, I did, anyway.

Back to your solo work. I think "Murder One" from KILLERS is a highlight of your career.
Everyone says that. It's one of my favourites as well. Anything with KILLERS and BATTLEZONE. I loved the "Fighting Back" album because it was really raw and punky, and a little bit thrashy I suppose, but ... the second album "Children Of Madness" where we sort of smoothed it out, I thought was a bloody great album as well. And it's the people you have around you as well, it sort of inspires you to do great things, and with Graham Bath in the band, Steve Hopgood and John Wiggins ... I really liked it. I felt more comfortable there than I've ever felt, with anything.

You've got a really loyal fan base from your time with IRON MAIDEN. Some of the biggest names in metal still point to those two albums as the best Maiden albums, and that obviously has a lot to do with you. What part of your legacy with Maiden are you proudest of?
Oh, both those albums, I really am. Because as a bunch of snotty kids out of the East End of London ... (laughs) we didn't know what we were doing, but there must have been something there in the first place. There really was. We all felt the spark and it was absolutely brilliant. When Clive came in, it made it even better, I don't know, it all just seemed to fall into the right place.

I think it was a kind of magic that couldn't be recaptured in the same way. If one plays "Iron Maiden" or "Killers" today, it really is like being transported back to that precise place and point in time, and it still feels like that magic to this day. And whatever happened afterwards doesn't take away from that. And that's what's so rare and magical about that.
(sighs) Yeah. Yes, there really was, absolutely. I agree. It's just hard to put your finger on it, to explain exactly what happened. We were all in a bit of shock ourselves, to be honest. The band's ethic at the time was to just go out there and play, which I still take to its peak. Yeah, it was weird. But we knew we had something there.

Could I ask you, what was your input in, say, co-writing "Remember Tomorrow"?
I did the lyrics for that. My grandfather had died at the time and I had this ... I don't know, it was a trippy sort of thing. Not that acid was ever taken or anything. (laughs) I was just imagining what it was like to be sort of ... slipping away. That's what it's supposed to represent. And if there is reincarnation you will return out of the fire, sort of thing. Yeah. (laughs) I don't know what I was on

or what I was taking that day. (laughs) I like doing that song. We still play it live. I've actually seen kids crying while I've been on stage, not because I'm on stage, but yeah, that song. (laughs)

We know all the old stories about why you left IRON MAIDEN. But looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?

I don't know, to be honest with you. I really can't answer that. It's ... at the time, you're very young, you barely know what's going on, you need to get a bit more life experience, and it's difficult. I don't really know how I'd deal with it. I'd probably just plunk along with Steve.

Steve Harris was a bit of a control freak, wasn't he?

But you've got to be one! There has to be one in the band to hold it all together and weather the storms. It was always Steve's idea, it was always Steve's baby, so he's fucking entitled to it. I mean it can get frustrating, for other musicians as well, but at the time I was too young and I didn't know much about it. I was happy to be in the band and happy to sing Steve's songs, and do it with feeling and love.

And that's what you're remembered for, in large part. It wasn't acrimonious, you parted ways at the same time as they decided to move on, right?

Yeah, that's right. We said ... (sighs) well I hadn't spoken to Steve for ages, and then about four or five months ago, he called me! (laughs) He'd spoken with Chuck from AIR FORCE, he'd been over at Steve's house and said: "Why don't you give Paul a ring?", and Steve said: "Well I don't think Paul will want to hear from me", and Chuck said: "Yeah he would, he'd love it", and Steve said: "Well yeah but at that time he called me Hitler", which I did! (laughs) But then he phoned me up sometime in the middle of the week and we had a chat. And then we started exchanging text messages over West Ham's ... (laughs darkly) football. I told Steve I've got his back no matter what happens, it's not a problem. You know, if I can help in any way, or whatever. So I thought I'd open the door a bit. I'm not gonna bug him every day obviously. (laughs) But that's alright, it's good. Maiden did us a favour last year, when they played in Connecticut. They put my wife and my boy on the guest list, and that was fantastic, you know.

That's brilliant! That's really great to hear.

It was absolutely brilliant. At least for my little boy, it was. He was loving it, he was really into it. They had a really fantastic day and Maria got well looked after, so can't say thanks enough for that. I did say thanks to him when we spoke. So that's good! (chuckles)

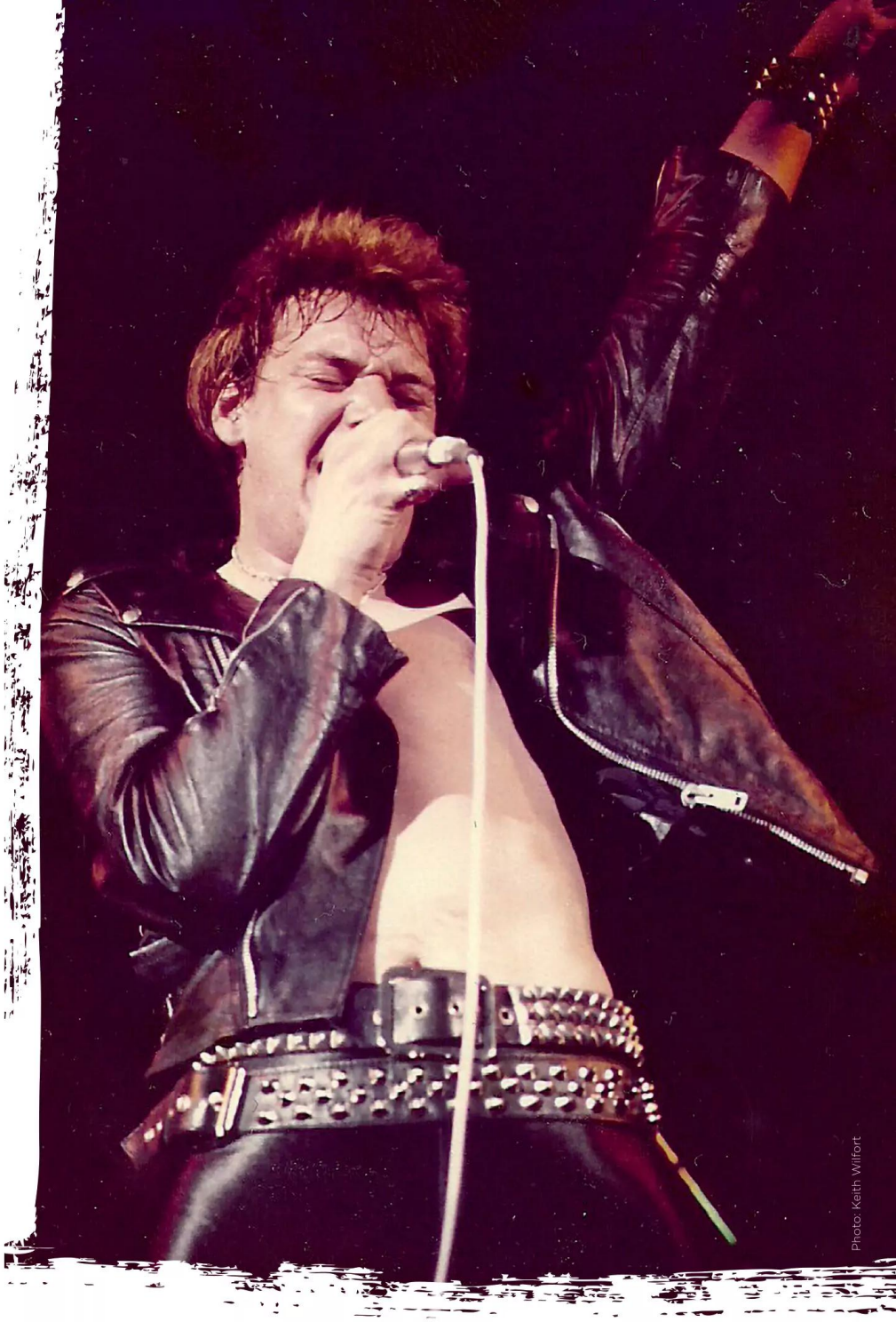


Photo: Keith Wilfort

I've heard you say several times that you were upset with the direction on "Killers" because you thought it was too soft. I thought it brought out the very best in your voice. I mean I know you love punk and the punky vibe on the first album, I just think that at that point in your career you could have taken your voice even further.

Well it was much smoother. But I think the songs on the first album were far superior. But I really wished we'd had that sort of production on the first album. That's what it's all about, and it didn't feel right, for me. That's when the rot started setting in and that's when I think I convinced myself that it wasn't gonna be right for me in the end, you know. Ah, it's hard to put into words, what you feel at that time, and now what's happened is that, it's some years later and it's different, you know. One does feel differently. But yeah, it was a fantastic production, but I just don't think the songs are as strong, basically.

Obviously, the production is enriched by the presence of one Martin Birch, may he rest in peace.

Well, I was afraid of the ol' headmaster. You know, Martin – amazing pedigree, and yeah, he did scare me, I must admit. I was a bit in awe of it all, so. He did bring out the best in us. But as I said, you know the other bloke, Wil Malone, on the first album, I had no idea what he was thinking. Got no input from him whatsoever, so I was just doing it blind. I'd never recorded before, apart from "The Soundhouse Tapes". *(gl)*

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH

STEVE "LOOPY" NEWHOUSE

GIG OF A LIFETIME

Former IRON MAIDEN roadie Steve "Loopy" Newhouse was with the band from their earliest days, and consequently possesses a first-hand account of their rise to the top over five short years. This amazing story is chronicled in his book "Loopyworld: The Iron Maiden Years", which gives readers a front row seat and a backstage pass to the band's earliest tours, his friendships with Paul Di'Anno and Steve Harris, and everything else that went on. Loopy is the author of three other novels and the co-host of Satellite 664, a podcast dedicated to analysis and dissection of all things Maiden.

So how did you get the gig with IRON MAIDEN in the first place? It was because you went along to rehearsal with Paul Di'Anno, who was your best mate, right?
Yes, that was the story. Paul was my best friend, we go back to when we were about ten or eleven. And we always used to hang out with each other. We were in a large group of people, but myself and Paul just got tired of the stupidity, so we went off on our own and just started doing our own thing. We were always at each other's houses, and we literally grew up together. We were in our first band together, a band called FEEDBACK. I was on bass and Paul was the singer. And that's pretty much where it started for Paul. He then got asked to join a band which was called ROCK CANDY. We would rehearse on a farmland and there was this concrete bunker, and it wasn't until after that I realised that the concrete bunker was actually a storage room for an artillery settlement. Which is right next to where we were recording. It's actually a WWII gun battery. There we were, 1975-76, rehearsing in this concrete bunker right next to it …

Well that's fitting for IRON MAIDEN!
Yes! Metal! (laughs) But there was a problem. We had our equipment stolen out of this bunker and that was the end of ROCK CANDY. Then Paul and I were at a pub at Leyton Station and Steve Harris just happened to be there. A mutual friend of ours, a guy called Trevor Searle, introduced us. So Steve and Paul had

a chat and Steve gave Paul the audition, and Paul passed it and got the job. And after about a month of Paul driving back and forth on his own, he said: "Look, do me a favour, I'm getting bored with this, can you come along?" And I just kept going with him and was given increasing responsibilities by the band.

Are you still in touch with Paul?
Yeah, I'm still in touch with him. We do chat. Last time I spoke to him by phone was a few months back, there was a bit of a problem and it was easier to talk on the phone and get it all sorted out. But yeah, we're still mates.

I follow and try to sort of trace his career going back and, when he was young and you guys were hanging around, he was very much Jack the Lad and all these things we expect of him, you know, fights and women and so on, but you know, also very personable, and very nice, deep down. And I get the sense – I mean I've read his biography, and …
You mean you've read "The Beast"? Ignore that, that's absolute rubbish.

Is it not true?
No. Basically, somebody asked him if they could put a book out, and he said yes and just let them get on with it. It's ghostwritten, if you actually read through that book, me and him were best friends for a very, very long time, and I was given a copy of the book, and when I read through it, my name was mentioned once. The ghostwriter didn't even bother doing the most basic research. He was out to write something salacious and Paul didn't care. And all of the stuff with the guns and violence, and so on. It's all crap.

Then he deserves a proper biography. He should work on something like what you've done together with someone who respects him and takes care with the material.
Yeah, I totally agree. Someone gave him a copy of my book a couple of years ago and he actually loves it. The three members of the band that have got a copy that I know of are Paul, Steve and Dave. I've not spoken to Dave about it, but Steve loves it as well.

In the grand scope of things, 1979/80 to 1984/85 – your period with the band –

the rise of the band in the space of five years, it's absolutely immense, almost incomprehensible. They were probably the hardest working band in the world. I don't see the possibility of that repeating itself nowadays.

Absolutely. In my case, I just happened to be in the right place at the right time. And to watch IRON MAIDEN rise the way they did. A mate recently said to me: "Did you realise that from the first gig at the Ruskin Arms to the first time headlining at the Rainbow theatre – it was only nine months." What? It's unbelievable. I mean yes, I was there from 1978 to 1984 and that was it. In fact, from 1984 until around about 1992 I still saw the band frequently and still worked the odd gig for them as part of the production company that I had joined. Then from around 1995 I had no contact with the band again until around 2012/13, and I had no idea what was going on. My kids were growing up and started to gather that I'd had something to do with IRON MAIDEN – they're metalheads as well, though they're more into thrash – and one day I got on Facebook and all these people started looking me up asking me if I was that very "Loopy" Newhouse. It made me realise how people pay attention not just to the band but the whole world of IRON MAIDEN, even the crew. It made me think about how in the early days how people like Dave Lights (the band's lighting engineer – ed.) and myself worked hard to help them put on the show and making sure they got what they wanted.

Tell me about your book "Loopyworld: The Iron Maiden years". How did you put that together?

Diaries helped me to put the book together. I'd done a series of columns for Metaltalk.net about my experiences with Maiden, but I didn't want to do the exact same thing, I wanted to expand the stories. The columns were probably about 500 words each, and I wanted to expand the stories more. Then I was going through some old stuff and lo and behold out comes this box with all my diaries in it. So there was the inspiration, I just sat down and hammered out the story. It took me two or three months to write the book.

That's what's so interesting about your personal story. I think most people never realise how much work goes into preparing a show. Which is not to mention all the big and small things crew members do. Without them there's no show, no band, no nothing, so to see it through those eyes and your personal stories for instance, is fascinating.

Oh yeah. And then to see the size of Maiden now. So I got in touch with everyone again and eventually I was invited by Steve to go down and check it out and I took my wife with me, and we saw that, and in the end I actually found it fascinating. I met Doug Sampson for the first time in many years and we were both looking at each other going: "I don't know this one, I don't know this one, and three quarters of the set is just songs I didn't know. And it was amazing to watch the fans going absolutely mental. Then when the tour for „The Book Of Souls" was announced, by this time I was in frequent contact with Steve again, so I arranged to follow them around on tour with some Maiden fans on Facebook and there'd be backstage passes at the door and we had a really good time.

Awesome! Back to "Loopyworld". You were onboarded in 1978 and then you were there until the end of Paul's tenure, more or less, which was just your first stint with the band?

It was about a nine-month difference, I was fired by Clive Burr (for whom Loopy was the drum roadie – ed.) at the end of the Japanese tour but I didn't find out until I was over in Seattle in the US for the next leg of the tour, and I was there for about a week before Colin Claydon took over from me. Paul was still with the band until they came off the US leg and about halfway through the next European leg they got rid of Paul.

Why did Clive Burr fire you?

You'll have to read the book to find out! (laughs) But then a few things happened in between before I was asked back in 1983. When Paul left IRON MAIDEN he told me he wanted to start his own band and wanted me with him, and one particular night we went down to the Ruskin Arms and there was a band called MINAS TIRITH, and we both realised how good these musicians were, so we basically told the singer to fuck off, we need the band, so that became Paul's first band post-Maiden, called LONEWOLF. Long story short, after going through a couple of managers we got a slot supporting THIN LIZZY on the eight-date tour of the UK supporting their "Renegade" album. On the opening date in Oxford, Paul and Scott Gorham (THIN LIZZY guitarist – ed.) were chatting in between soundchecks and Gorham says to Paul: "There are two things you don't do on this tour. You don't put your feet on my monitors, and you don't fuck my wife." And he turns around and says: "I've just done both!" (laughs) So anyway, they did a few more concerts as LONEWOLF and then changed their name to DI'ANNO and released his first solo album as DI'ANNO. By that time I was working for the stage hand company Stage Miracles, because I needed money too. And that's probably where we parted company. We still stayed in touch, but our paths diverged at that point.

But IRON MAIDEN eventually asked you back ...

I got a phone call from Keith Wilfort (first head of the IRON MAIDEN fan club – ed.) in 1983 giving me a heads up that Tony Wiggins (the band's tour manager – ed.) was going to get in touch with me and that there might be an opening. So he did, and we met at up at the hotel in Kensington, and off we went. I seriously thought by the end of the tour that would be the end of it, but nobody said anything, and the following year I got a call saying pack your bags, we're going to Jersey (where IRON MAIDEN were writing the "Powerslave" album – ed.). And after that we went on to Compass Point in Nassau, Bahamas, together for the recordings. I remember Bruce writing part of "Powerslave". They actually wrote most of the album as they recorded it. My time in Nassau, I basically completely fucked it up. It was a dream job. Nassau was an amazing place. But you should read the book. I thought it was going to be an instant dismissal for what I did, but that didn't happen, we went on to Fort Lauderdale to do band rehearsals for the tour. Two weeks later I got called into Tony Wiggins's office and basically got told then my services were no longer required. But he offered me to stay on for another six weeks with pay, and so I'd have been stupid to say no. We still had a great time. After that, there were occasions when Maiden used to play in London where I was brought in as part of the local crew to help them out. I was the liaison between the local crew – Stage Miracles – and the Maiden crew. Of course, I was working alongside people like Dickie Bell, Steve Gadd, all the greats. They were such a laugh.

You've written a couple of other books, haven't you?

Yes. What's happening is we're uploading "JusTin", which came out in 2017, a year after "Loopyworld", because the publisher handed it back over to me, so we're putting that back up on Amazon, as a paperback and e-book, and I'm just about to publish "JusTin 2", which has been sitting on my computer for three years, and we're doing the same with that. All of this will be available on my new website Loopyworld.uk. Also on there is my other book, which I published a year ago, called "Funderthuck". That's about a young English rock band: when heavy metal and the underworld meet. Bruce Dickinson makes appearances in it ... he's their pilot for every fight. It's about a bunch of young kids who all of a sudden are touring America and get into various situations – some are based in reality, and others are just made up. It's a total piss-up story. I actually sent a pdf copy to Steve Harris. He sent me a text going: "You're fucking mad!" (laughs) They don't call me Loopy for nothing! (laughs) (gl)

"KILLERS"

1981

Following a European tour with the distinction this time of opening for KISS, "Killers" saw two extremely important personnel changes for the band's future. Enter guitarist Adrian Smith, who would later contribute to many of the band's most important songs and create a superior musical dynamic with Dave Murray, and legendary producer Martin Birch, who would effectively become the "sixth member of the band" until his retirement over a decade later.

Dennis Stratton had become increasingly estranged from the rest of the band since the emergence of musical differences during the recording of "Iron Maiden", even ending up traveling separately with the road crew on the ensuing tour. Steve Harris fired Stratton in October 1980 following the recording of their third single, "Women In Uniform", a song originally by the Australian band SKYHOOKS (and once again featuring Margaret Thatcher on the single cover, this time poised to take revenge on an Eddie happily cavorting with two pretty women). It also spawned the band's first music video. Harris was unhappy with the song, which he felt was too commercial for IRON MAIDEN. But it didn't help that Stratton had colluded with the song's producer on orders from Zomba, the band's publishing company, to tamper with the mix "to try and get a hit single".

But, this time, Adrian Smith was finally persuaded to come on board. The guitarist was born Adrian Frederick Smith on 27 February 1957, in the London borough of Hackney. In Smith, Dave Murray finally got a perfectly compatible musical partner on guitar who, because he was also Murray's childhood friend, fit the band like a glove (in an ironic twist, Steve Harris's first band GYPSY'S KISS had a guitarist named Dave Smith, strangely foreshadowing the Murray/Smith partnership). Moreover, Smith had taken his first musical steps with Murray in their garage band STONE FREE (Murray sold Smith his very first guitar), and they later also played together for a short time in URCHIN. With IRON MAIDEN's fortunes looking vastly better than URCHIN's, Smith rightly decided the time was right to make the life-changing switch.

And when star producer Martin Birch took IRON MAIDEN under his wing, the fledgling band felt like they had practically received a knighthood. Having witnessed the band live, Ritchie Blackmore of RAINBOW and DEEP PURPLE had recommended to Birch that he produces the band, and Birch agreed. With "Killers", Birch would pick up the threads that he had woven into the fundamental structures of British heavy metal and began propelling the genre forward into the new decade with IRON MAIDEN. Birch was the grand magus of hard rock producers in the UK, being responsible for milestone albums like DEEP PURPLE's "Machine Head" and BLACK SABBATH's "Heaven And Hell". He also produced WISHBONE ASH and BLUE ÖYSTER CULT in the early 1970's, both pioneers of duelling twin guitar combos. He subsequently became the exclusive house producer for IRON MAIDEN, ceasing to work with other bands entirely, and virtually held the rank of band member, somewhat akin to the role producer George Martin had played for THE BEATLES.

IRON MAIDEN had picked the cream of the crop from their proven live repertoire for their debut album, and only leftovers remained for "Killers". Merely "Murders In The Rue Morgue" and "Prodigal Son" were completely new compositions. But Birch's production wizardry succeeded in making the supposed leftover material sound even better than the band's tried and tested favourites. Adrian Smith's involvement in the recording process also made the songs very different from early demos and live recordings.

"Killers" opens with a tremendous one-two punch. "The Ides Of March", an instrumental intro which at a mere 1:44 is IRON MAIDEN's shortest track, is a thunderous overture whose militaristic march invokes the moments before going to war (or performing – Maiden would use it as the intro tape to their shows on the ensuing tour). The title is taken from Shakespeare's play "Julius Caesar", and perfectly sets up the furious, demonic "Wrathchild", a bona fide IRON MAIDEN classic that has been played at almost every concert since and a clear indicator of the central role Harris's aggressive bass playing would take on future

MAIDEN
FROM PAGE 18
MURRAY MEETS 'Eddie'...
"We often notice the band members in the wings, watching our show. They like to see Eddie warming up the crowd, they love that. Ace Frehley got so carried away once, I even saw him climbing up the lighting rig to get a better view!"
FABULOUS. BUT all this is a long way away from the Ruskin Arms, isn't it?
"Yeah," says Murray, somewhat nostalgically. "I hope our fans don't forget us while we're over here. Although to me it feels just the same as it did when we were playing around the pubs in the East End, just the same . . .
"Trouble is, you can't remain a cult band all of your life. You've got to make a living. If people want to see Maiden then we've got to branch out, we've got to do it because if we don't
that doesn't mean to say that they don't want to improve themselves. Take their debut album, for example — six months or so after its release, Di'anno finds it 'rather embarrassing' and is anxious for
you know, you've got to keep in perspective instead of walking around thinking, alright, we've got it sewn up, we're the fucking new Deep Purple. I don't know, it's a bit weird. You've got to take it
... WHILE DI'ANNO dons Gene Simmons-style make-up

Article in Sounds #10, 1980

Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

TRACKLIST

1. The Ides Of March
2. Wrathchild
3. Murders In The Rue Morgue
4. Another Life
5. Genghis Khan
6. Innocent Exile
7. Killers
8. Prodigal Son
9. Purgatory
10. Drifter

SINGLES

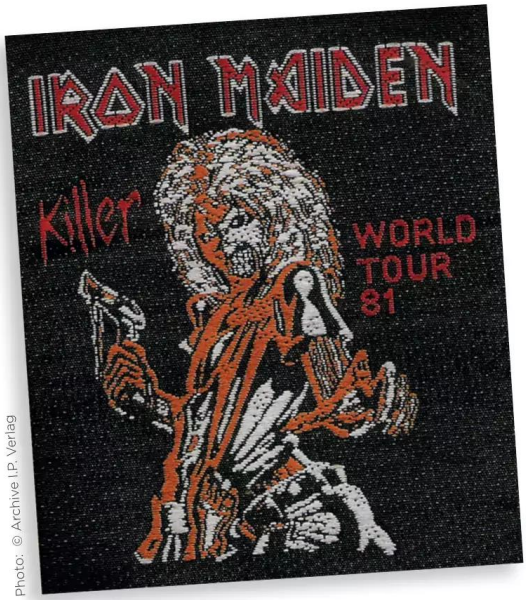


Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

Most importantly, Di'Anno became overly engaged indulgent in the trappings of the rock star lifestyle, causing shows to be cancelled because he was not fit to perform. This aroused the wrath of an ever more disciplined and professional Harris with his sights set on the biggest of prizes, and Di'Anno was asked to leave at the end of the tour.

projects. Originally appearing on the "Metal For Muthas" compilation, this reworked version is positively ferocious, helped by Smith's reworking of the guitar parts in certain sections of the song.

Next up, "Murders In The Rue Morgue" is an upbeat, dynamic rocker based on the short story of the same name by Edgar Allan Poe, and an absolute highlight of the album. Perhaps not immediately thought of as an "epic" in the traditional IRON MAIDEN sense due to its shorter length and frenetic pace, the song nevertheless qualifies in that it is both inspired by a classic piece of literature, and in its frantic musical and vocal delivery. Di'Anno's recounting of Edgar Allan Poe's plot line (with a twist) in the first person is one of his finest performances. It feels as if Di'Anno was born just for his unique voice and character to tell this tale. Complemented by irresistible drum patterns, bass lines and guitar leads in a highly unusual songwriting progression, the song would provide a highlight of the live set and an excellent opener for new recruit Bruce Dickinson on the 1982 "Beast On The Road" tour as well. One could argue the objective was to lay the ghost of Di'Anno to rest as quickly as possible.

"Another Life", is a powerful song addressing suicide, musical drive and the feeling of wanting to escape. "Genghis Khan" is the album's second instrumental, and was oddly a target for criticism by the music press at that time. For IRON MAIDEN fans, though, it was a blueprint for Harris's later, more progressive work. Rounding-out side A, "Innocent Exile", an earlier live staple with a distinctive bass intro, continues the theme of being a fugitive, a topic that would recur throughout Maiden's career. "This was one of the very first IRON MAIDEN songs," Harris explained. "It was an old stage favourite ... That opening bass riff was originally played on the guitar. It was written on the bass for the guitar. The bass was originally playing crashing chords behind it. Then we switched it around."

Title track "Killers" is another tour de force with its unique compositional structure, a template for many other Maiden masterpieces where Smith's positive influence is most noticeable. It features blood-curdling screams and demonic laughs from Di'Anno and an imaginatively immersive experience, with the narrative passing from third to first person. "Prodigal Son", an understated but beautiful ballad addressing 'Lamia', a female demon, continues the theme that runs through the album of absconding from earthly reality and the desire for redemption. This paves the way to the closing pearls of the furious but eerie "Purgatory" (the third single release from that era, after the excellent "Twilight Zone", an embryonic speed metal track which was released as a single in the UK but otherwise found only on Canadian and US pressings of the album), and "Drifter". The latter completes a narrative thread throughout the album of drifting through the dregs of social reality and the ambitions of the imagination in trying to find one's place. It hearkens back to the band's earlier days on the pub circuit in sound and spirit.

Released on 2 February 1981, "Killers" surprisingly only received a lukewarm reception by the British rock press, and 'only' reached #12 in the UK charts. It seemed the NWOBHM hype was subsiding, and IRON MAIDEN were regarded by the wider rock world as upstarts who were too big for their boots. However, this did not bother them unduly, as they set about conquering the US (again opening for JUDAS PRIEST), continental Europe, and Japan on their first proper world tour. It was at that moment when they changed from the compelling but somewhat rough around the edges-pub formation to the professional arena act for which they are now known. Paul Di'Anno, though, was not enthused about this transition, or the change in the band's sound. He perceived it as too mellow by comparison to the debut, despite his own excellent vocal performance presented a vast improvement over the debut. Most significantly, he became overly indulgent and engaged in the trappings of the rock star lifestyle, causing shows to be cancelled because he was not fit to perform. This aroused the wrath of an ever more disciplined and professional Harris with his sights set on bigger heights. Ultimately, Di'Anno was asked to leave at the end of the tour following the release of a final live EP, "Maiden Japan" – though both sides maintain to this day that the split was mutual and amicable. *(rp/gl)*

"THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST"

1982

At first glance, the split with Paul Di'Anno seemed to have come at the worst possible time for a band that was on the cusp on conquering the world. Nevertheless, the search for a suitable successor was simple, short, and sweet. Steve Harris had his sights set squarely on Bruce Dickinson, the singer of SAMSON, and after just one studio audition and band rehearsal, Dickinson was hired on the spot.

Paul Bruce Dickinson was born on 7 August 1958, in Worksop, Nottinghamshire. The inspiration to his life-long pursuit of musical excellence found its origin in DEEP PURPLE's ethereal "Child In Time". His initial ambition was to become a drummer but was quickly overtaken by the burning desire to scream into a microphone, following his hero, Ian Gillan. Dickinson's first school band was christened PARADOX and renamed STYX (no relation to the real STYX). He then joined acts such as SPEED and SHOTS, both, however, merely boot camps for his first really important gig with SAMSON. SAMSON had already released their debut album, "Survivors", during the rising tide of the NWOBHM. Their song "Tomorrow Or Yesterday" had also been released on the "Metal For Muthas" sampler – when Dickinson encountered them in 1979.

With SAMSON, Dickinson recorded the albums "Head On" and "Shock Tactics" over the next two years under the rather odd artist's moniker of "Bruce Bruce". Dickinson first came into contact with IRON MAIDEN in 1980, when Maiden appeared as SAMSON's opening act at a concert at London's Music Machine. After the bankruptcy of SAMSON's record label, which put the band members themselves into immense debt and legal trouble, a joint appearance at Reading Festival with Maiden and a quick one-on-one backstage with Rod Smallwood led to the audition that convinced Dickinson to make the switch to the Maiden camp. Dickinson's entry into the band marked the beginning of the five-album 'classic' era in which IRON MAIDEN ascended to the metal throne and became the undisputed defenders of the heavy metal faith. History agrees that they are the quintessential heavy metal band that hard rockers, thrashers, and even black and death metallers could all agree on.

The new frontman's vocals were certainly in the tradition of Ian Gillan. His extreme operatic range with extraordinarily high peak tones earned him the nickname of "Air Raid Siren", a fitting moniker given his later career as an aviator. As one commentator succinctly put it, "the staples of live sets that everyone cheers for even today are invariably the same songs that wield Dickinson's gut-busting tenor like a knight charging into a jousting match with his lance brandished aloft. Sharp-edged diction, incredible belting and those blood-curdling screams" ... are invariably the central element in the making of many a life-long IRON MAIDEN devotee. Dickinson would go on to become arguably one of the last true Renaissance men on the planet, with his incredibly wide range of interests and hobbies. As the most educated member of IRON MAIDEN with a bachelor's degree in History (and later an Honorary Doctorate in Music) from Queen Mary & Westfield College, University of London, he also holds a pilot's license for multiple types of planes. It is hard to imagine that he would later combine aviation with his career in IRON MAIDEN. Later a critically acclaimed solo artist in his own right, Dickinson has written novels, has competed at professional level in fencing tournaments, has tested the

(From left) Murray, Smith, Dickinson, McBrain, Harris

Photo: Warner

TRACKLIST

1. Invaders
2. Children Of The Damned
3. The Prisoner
4. 22 Acacia Avenue
5. The Number Of The Beast
6. Run To The Hills
7. Gangland
8. Hallowed Be Thy Name

SINGLES

waters as an actor and film producer, and has also hosted his own radio show.

"The Number Of The Beast" was originally recorded at Battery Studios in just five weeks. However, the band was facing an inconvenient truth, as there was no workable material left from the band's early days. It was 'make or break' for the band and their third album held their fate. What followed though was an album release of unimaginable compositional creativity and energy. Dickinson's influence on this album should not be underestimated, but since he was still in the shadow of contractual obligations with SAMSON, he remained uncredited for contributions to "Run To The Hills", "The Prisoner" and "Children Of The Damned", as well as other arrangements. Adrian Smith also became involved with songwriting, and even drummer Clive Burr contributed, co-writing "Gangland" with Smith. This new diversification away from Harris as the quasi-sole songwriter and the new, creative possibilities at hand with vocal maestro Bruce Dickinson transmogrified IRON MAIDEN into a completely new band.

Album opener "Invaders", an evolution of one of their "Soundhouse Tapes" tracks deals lyrically with invading Viking marauders and is widely considered one of the two weakest tracks on the album. This however does not detract from the song's quality, with Harris's charging bass lines duelling with Dickinson's soaring voice to announce the arrival of the new band. "Children Of The Damned", a track inspired by the 1964 British science fiction horror film of the same name, is a semi-ballad similar in structure to "Remember Tomorrow" but a perfection of the genre that would continue to inspire bands like METALLICA. The tension between the elegiac verses and the powerful chorus holds perfectly until the song finally explodes into an orgiastic guitar duel between Smith and Murray that was at the time unprecedented at this level of intensity. "The Prisoner" referred lyrically to the eponymous television series with and directed by Patrick McGoohan, who surprisingly agreed to let the band use the show's original spoken intro, the famous "I am not a number, I am a free man!". "22 Acacia Avenue" is the lyrical continuation of the sordid tale of "Charlotte The Harlot", and originally stems from Adrian Smith's repertoire with URCHIN, spiced up to the level of an IRON MAIDEN classic with some help from Harris.

The title track, however, gave Rod Smallwood the opportunity to demonstrate his promotional genius. Prior to the album's release, he cleverly leaked (tall) tales about supernatural events supposedly occurring in the studio during recordings. Martin Birch, for example, was said to have had a car accident involving a van carrying a group of nuns right after recording the track, with the repair bill coming in at £666 (he asked to have it rounded off to £668 or £670 – or so he says). Together with Derek Riggs's legendary album cover, Smallwood generated the greatest possible publicity ahead of launch. This certainly helped to send the album, which released on 22 March 1982, to #1 in the UK charts – the band's first number one. The title track, which was based on a nightmare Harris had and was expanded to reference the film "Omen II" and further introduced passages from the Book of Revelations. This was of course objectionable to religious zealots, who branded IRON MAIDEN as Satanists, free promotion at its best. This led to public burnings of the album in the US, among other insanities, but which in turn, fuelled sales figures immensely.

"If someone who'd never heard Maiden before – someone from another planet or something – asked you about Maiden, what would you play them?" Harris once asked. "I think 'Hallowed Be Thy Name' is the one."

It's first single "Run To The Hills", which reached #7 in the UK singles chart, saw Dickinson not only sing, but also embrace acting. "This song is about the American Indians ... The first part is from the side of the Indians. The second part is from the side of the soldiers. I wanted to try and get the feeling of galloping horses," Harris explained in 1983. Because of the extreme heights Dickinson's voice soars to, the song also became a vocal touchstone for him and a live fan favourite. "Gangland", the aforementioned composition by Burr and Smith, is probably the most underrated song on the album, but exudes its own charm in addition to showcasing some interesting jazz-influenced drumming from the technically highly proficient Burr.

But with album closer "Hallowed Be Thy Name", IRON MAIDEN saved the best for last. The song's seven minutes, which are among the most powerful in music history, are peppered with an otherworldly vocal feat by Dickinson, the catchiest guitar ostinati in rock music history, and an inimitable climax in the chorus at the end. "If someone who'd never heard Maiden before – someone from another planet or something – asked you about Maiden, what would you play them?" Harris once asked rhetorically of his song. "I think 'Hallowed Be Thy Name' is the one." The title is taken from "Our Father", the Christian Lord's Prayer, and the song is the philosophical first-person account of a condemned man awaiting execution by hanging, and who can't understand his fear because he is certain that his soul is immortal and will prevail beyond his death. Opening with a superbly doomy atmosphere before being succeeded by memorable instrumental lines, signature guitar harmonies, and perhaps the most impassioned performance of Dickinson's career, the deep-thinking lyrics about mortality, the melodic balance between light and dark, and the theatricality of the presentation arguably enter the song into the realm of high culture. Such a feat would not be the last time for IRON MAIDEN to achieve.

In top form at the time, the band could even afford to discard the brooding and apocalyptic "Total Eclipse" and use it for the B-side to the "Run To The Hills" single instead, a decision which Harris today rightly regrets. "Total Eclipse" was even part of the live set on the "Beast On The Road" tour in Europe, which consisted of a staggering 188 concerts which then also led the band to tour the US, Japan, and Australia. It became evident for the world to see that with Bruce Dickinson, IRON MAIDEN had acquired a uniquely talented and unusually professional and entertaining frontman, among all his other remarkable attributes. He also sang the older Di'Anno songs to perfection – something hard to imagine if the roles were reversed (notwithstanding all of Di'Anno's own unique attributes of course). What came next was another twist of fate as another band member began to falter. Clive Burr was at the receiving end of Harris's wrath when he failed to resist the temptations of the rock n' roll lifestyle, particularly on the North American leg of the tour. According to legend, Burr even performed an entire gig throwing up in a bucket. Under Harris's harsh glare, the avant-garde drummer was out of IRON MAIDEN after the tour concluded in December 1982. Four decades after its release, the centrality of "The Number Of The Beast" to the history of heavy metal is undisputed. *(rp/gl)*

"PIECE OF MIND"

1983

Already an old friend of Rod Smallwood's and well-known to the boys in IRON MAIDEN, Nicko McBrain joined the band immediately following Clive Burr's departure. The drummer, born on 5 June 1952, in the Hackney borough of London (like Adrian Smith), had previously played for STREETWALKERS, PAT TRAVERS, and French political metallers TRUST. McBrain recorded two albums with the latter (posthumously immortalised by the 1988 ANTHRAX cover of their hit "Anti-Social"), "Marche Ou Crève" (1981) and "Savage" (1982). Ironically, Clive Burr would become his successor in TRUST, drumming on "Trust IV" in 1983. But McBrain's arrival sealed the line-up for IRON MAIDEN's "golden age" period, which would produce four further perfect, unimpeachable albums.

cBrain, whose first instruments at the age of ten were kitchen utensils before moving on to covering THE ROLLING STONES and THE BEATLES with more sophisticated equipment, had a very different style of drumming from Clive Burr. He treats his toms hyperactively, has a very fast single pedal technique on the bass drum (he is often mistakenly thought to be playing with a double bass pedal), and builds in a variety of syncopated rhythmic swing refinements against the more usual basic rock beat. His grooves are unique and unmistakable, McBrain is one of few metal drummers that can be recognised by their style alone. If Bruce Dickinson is a legitimate successor to Ian Gillan, Michael "Nicko" McBrain is probably the spiritual son of Ian Paice. And when McBrain joined IRON MAIDEN, the band's eventful early phase with its regular line-up changes came to an end. The men of Iron would record four albums with the same line-up, starting with "Piece Of Mind". They retreated to the abandoned Le Chalet hotel on the island of Jersey, which resulted in various new songwriting constellations. Recordings, though, were made at Compass Point Studios, which became the band's workplace for two months (and for the next several albums), located in the Caribbean holiday paradise of Nassau, the Bahamas.

"Piece Of Mind" gets off to an unforgettable start with "Where Eagles Dare", a song based on Alistair MacLean's WWII novel of the same name. McBrain makes an immediate impression, handing over his calling card in the form of a rapid bass drum attack (he had to practice specifically to pull off the song's signature rhythm with a single bass drum, as he refused to revert to a double bass drum setup, considering it "undignified"), and massive rolls on the toms. Interestingly, the famous drum fill opening resulted in a row between Maiden and record label EMI, who told the band they couldn't open the album with it. This resulted in EMI being banned from the studio while recording was ongoing, a sign of the creative control the band was to be adamant in maintaining from that point onwards.

Dickinson was solely responsible for the majestic "Revelations", the starting point of which was a theme by Ralph Vaughan Williams, which was in turn based on a hymn by G. K. Chesterton, from which the song also borrows its opening lyrical passage. The singer brilliantly developed the song further with influences from Alesteir Crowley, the track stands as an absolute jewel in the IRON MAIDEN crown and a definitive indication of the vocalist's burgeoning songwriting prowess. With "Flight Of Icarus", Dickinson indulges his love of Greek mythology (albeit with a twist – Icarus is here betrayed by his father). Co-written with Smith, the song was selected as the first single (which also featured an excellent cover of JETHRO TULL's "Cross-Eyed Mary", from their seminal album "Aqualung"). The band, however, still sees this decision as the reason why the album did not top the UK charts, reaching 'only' #3. The song itself, however, contains all the IRON MAIDEN hallmarks and remains a fan favourite. Its slower pace is a refreshing change and the result of an argument between Dickinson and Harris, who wanted to speed the song up (Dickinson stood his ground, in what was fast becoming a challenge to Harris's control of the band). Meanwhile, "Die With Your Boots On" was another epic heavy metal track that also went down a storm live, with a mixture of apocalyptic and go get 'em lyrics, unforgettable riffs, and an unusual chorus written by Smith, Dickinson, and Harris, a compositional combo that would create much further magic together in the future.

Side B on the original record starts with a bang: second single "The Trooper", one of the most popular IRON MAIDEN songs ever and Harris's personal favourite (at least to judge from the amount of times it has been played live, never leaving the setlist, to the slight annoyance of long-time fans who might prefer a little more diverse representation from "Piece Of Mind"). The trademark galloping bass rhythm represented the British Light Brigade's attack on Russian positions during the Crimean War in 1854, and was inspired Alfred, Lord Tennyson's famous poem "The Charge Of The Light Brigade" from the same year.

The album slows down slightly for the next two songs, "Still Life" and "Quest For Fire". The first is an unsettling but excellent half-ballad serving as Harris's and Murray's interpretation of Ramsey Campbell's 1964 short story ,"The Inhabitant of the Lake". The lyrics and build-up to the song climax drawing the listener in beyond the point of no return, just as the narrator is drawn by enveloping madness into the lake. The second, based on the film of the same name

TRACKLIST

1. Where Eagles Dare
2. Revelations
3. Flight Of Icarus
4. Die With Your Boots On
5. The Trooper
6. Still Life
7. Quest For Fire
8. Sun And Steel
9. To Tame A Land

SINGLES

Photo: Tony Mottram

In terms of lyrics and subject matter, "Piece Of Mind" was head and shoulders above the usual "girls & booze" clichés espoused by their metal colleagues at that time.

directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, is the weakest track on the album, but is nevertheless driven by an unusually intricate rhythm. With "Sun And Steel", a hymn to the legendary samurai Miyamoto Musashi with the title taken from an essay by prodigious novelist Yukio Mishima, IRON MAIDEN deliver a highly underrated jewel that could be thought of as a masterful homage to DEEP PURPLE's "Highway Star" (pay close attention to the guitar solo). Unfortunately, this killer song never made it into the live set – blessed be the band that can afford to be that stingy!

But again, IRON MAIDEN saved the best for last. With resident album epic "To Tame A Land", Harris ventured a return to long form and attempted to recount Frank Herbert's equally epic novel, "Dune". Students of classical guitar will trace elements of Isaac Albeniz's "Asturias" in the song. The track masterfully suggests desolate deserts in its fitful rhythm and conjures up the rise of a chosen one to overthrow corrupt power through the mastery of barren (inner and outer) nature through its soaring vocals. Frank Herbert himself, though, was not especially enthusiastic about rock bands in general, and IRON MAIDEN in particular. The band received a message from Herbert's agents stating: "Frank Herbert doesn't like rock bands, particularly heavy rock bands, and especially bands like IRON MAIDEN" upon seeking permission to use the title "Dune". Consequently, they were forced to change the name of the song. The brouhaha didn't stop Dickinson from having a good go at Herbert on stage, to the joy of fans, in fantastic diatribes captured on bootleg recordings from the ensuing tour.

Overall, "Piece Of Mind" is probably the most balanced IRON MAIDEN album in terms of songwriting so far, involving all band members except McBrain. Harris's monopoly was no more. He had brought in the 'hit' of the album with "The Trooper" and was still the most prolific contributor. However, Smith and in particular Dickinson were also making their presence felt. Their contributions were now inextricably woven into the fabric of IRON MAIDEN greatness. In terms of lyrics and subject matter, "Piece Of Mind" was head and shoulders above the usual 'girls & booze' clichés espoused by most of their metal colleagues at that time. The demanding lyrics and intellectual subject matter may well rather more have deserved the original title for the album, "Food For Thought", which was discarded in the composition phase after a night down the pub.

For the religious zealots who had been on the barricades for "The Number Of The Beast", IRON MAIDEN beautifully packed in a load of ridicule on "Piece Of Mind". On the back cover there was a modification of the verse from the Book of Revelations, and the inside sleeve pictured the band sat around a dining table apparently about to help themselves to a large serving of, well, brain. "Still Life" is introduced by a deliberate backmasking message from McBrain, in which he mimics a sketch by John Bird doing an impression of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, complete with a burp. "We thought, if people were going to be stupid about this sort of thing, we might as well give them something to be really stupid about, you know?", he later explained to journalist Mick Wall.

"Piece Of Mind" was rather more successful than "The Number Of The Beast" in the US, now advancing to an impressive #14 on the Billboard 200 from #33 the previous year, indicating the increasing global appeal of IRON MAIDEN. The release of the album on16 May 1983 was followed by the eight-month "World Piece Tour", which was a bit shorter than the previous one, but which featured evermore on-stage antics and fireworks. The two televised final concerts in Dortmund, Germany, as part of the "RockPop in Concert" nights on 17 and 18 December 1983, triggered the first love for IRON MAIDEN in the local rock press and generally sparked the (Ger)manic enthusiasm for everything metal. IRON MAIDEN eclipsed the other acts (including SCORPIONS, JUDAS PRIEST, DEF LEPPARD and OZZY OSBOURNE) with a bombastic performance that culminated in Dickinson performing a 'lobotomy' on the unfortunate Eddie – but he would return from the dead as a Pharaoh the following year ... *(rp/gl)*

"POWERSLAVE"

1984

After the exhausting "World Piece Tour", IRON MAIDEN allowed themselves a mere three weeks off to prepare for their next feat: a masterpiece entitled "Powerslave". Using the same method as on the previous album, the band barricaded themselves in sleepy Jersey for the songwriting sessions and booked Compass Point Studios in Nassau in the Bahamas for recordings. Finally, they decamped to Electric Lady Studios in New York for the mixing process – almost certainly doubly motivating JIMI HENDRIX aficionado Dave Murray. But the result would rival Hendrix's influence, at least in the metal world.

Powerslave" would present IRON MAIDEN at their most ambitious, grandiose, and dramatic at every level of its execution. Songs topically spanning ancient Egyptian mythology, opium-inspired epic poetry, nuclear annihilation, aerial battles, and duelling flow seamlessly across a 52-minute belter of an album adorned with the band's greatest cover art yet and supported by a gruelling world tour the likes and size of which had never before been seen. With everyone at the top of their game – Dickinson's voice arguably at its career-defining finest, Smith and Murray entwined at the hip like never before, Harris at his songwriting best and McBrain ensconced as the definitive IRON MAIDEN drummer – the band would arguably never scale the same heights again. Nevertheless, the album stands as a monument to the inextinguishable fire that had taken the band from the pubs and clubs of London to the summit of heavy metal and global domination in just five short years. Aided in no small part by the production magic of their sixth band member Martin Birch, the managerial brilliance of Rod Smallwood, and the dazzling artwork of Derek Riggs, each giving it their all for the IRON MAIDEN family firing on all cylinders alongside the band. By near-unanimous consent, "Powerslave" to this day stands as one of the greatest albums ever released in heavy metal, period! At the same time, the accompanying tour broke every conceivable rule about what a heavy metal band could and could not do.

Album opener (and second single) "Aces High" describes the pilot of a Royal Air Force Spitfire fighter plane scrambling to defend the country from a German air raid in the 1940 Battle of Britain. Harris once again succeeds in creating a sonic painting and character piece simultaneously. The lyrical theme translated to perfection in the brutal but flawless performance evoking perfectly the sentiments one associates with what WWII pilots might have experienced. A song with timeless vitality which sounds as fresh today as it did in 1984, "Aces High" would also open live concerts, preceded by Winston Churchill's "We Shall Fight On The Beaches" speech, suitably setting the tone of anticipation for the assault to come.

Next, first single "2 Minutes To Midnight" addresses the danger of nuclear conflict during the Cold War and the corporate, political and other greed sustaining it. The title comes from the so-called "Doomsday Clock", a symbol representing the likelihood of man-made global catastrophe maintained annually by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and which addresses threats to humanity from unchecked scientific and technical advances. A Smith/Dickinson composition, the song's commercial accessibility would demonstrate Smith's flair for memorable melodies without compromising aggression, with the latter equally manifest in Dickinson's gripping lyrics "about the romance of war, and how we're all repelled and fascinated by it at the same time". The song would also become a live favourite, never leaving the set from the ensuing tour onwards.

"Losfer Words (Big 'Orra)", the band's first instrumental track since the Di'Anno era, was unfortunately also the last in the band's history. IRON MAIDEN biographer Mick Wall wrongly rips the charming track as a "lamentably vacuous instrumental", which couldn't be further from the truth – the tune bounces with energy and fun, clearly the result of a great jam in the studio the band felt was grooving enough in its own right to not to have to rewrite to lend vocals to. Next, the riveting "Flash Of The Blade" is a paean to Dickinson's love of fencing (Dickinson once placed 7th in the rankings of the British Fencing Association, and later reckoned he may have had a chance to qualify for the Olympics in 1992 "... but the British Olympic team isn't very good", as he explained.)

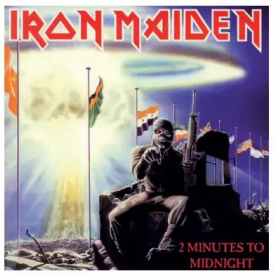
"The Duellists" is another song about duelling, this time from Harris's perspective of the honour involved and based on the film of the same name by Ridley Scott, which in turn is based on the literary template provided by Joseph Conrad in his short story "The Duel", about two Napoleonic officers fighting an ongoing series of futile duels. "The Duellists" and "Back In The Village" both feature complex hammer-on/pull-off harmonizing before it was popular, showcasing both Smith's and Murray's traits as unique individual lead players, Smith's technical phrasing complementing Murray's more classic licks. The latter resides among IRON MAIDEN's undeservedly forgotten compositions, a sequel to "The Prisoner", again picking up from the TV series of the same name.

Meanwhile, Maiden again saved the very best for last, this time with the one-two punch of "Powerslave" and "Rime Of The Ancient Mariner", arguably the two finest tracks in their entire repertoire. The majestic "Powerslave", penned by Dickinson, describes a megalomaniacal pharaoh who cannot comprehend his impending submission to 'the power of death' having achieved supreme power on earth, and addresses the conflict between power and mortality. Dickinson also intended the song as a metaphor

TRACKLIST

1. Aces High
2. 2 Minutes To Midnight
3. Losfer Words (Big 'Orra)
4. Flash Of The Blade
5. The Duellists
6. Back In The Village
7. Powerslave
8. Rime Of The Ancient Mariner

SINGLES



Simply one of the greatest songs ever written, "Rime Of The Ancient Mariner" does full justice to its inspiration and is a true work of art in its own right, setting imaginations ablaze and encouraging many a schoolboy to further explore the worlds of Coleridge and literature more broadly. This is central to what makes IRON MAIDEN special and a rare feat for a heavy metal band, justly ennobling them to the status of 'thinking man's heavy metal'.

for the music business: "It was also about ... what was happening to us. We were slaves to the power, whether musically, or in terms of chasing success", Dickinson confessed. With an intro from the bowels of a slave-holding abyss, the song goes from strength to strength, from its immediate Middle Eastern-flavoured driving hook through to the gloriously doom-laden pre-chorus and chorus sustained by resplendent backing harmony vocals. Blistering alternating twin axe attack solos duel after a brief, slow reflective passage, leading the song through to its otherworldly conclusion, climaxing in a bloodcurdling vocal to defy death itself.

As if that wasn't enough, the track kicks directly into "Rime Of The Ancient Mariner", Harris's absolute masterpiece and the crowning songwriting achievement of his career. At 13:45 minutes long, it would be IRON MAIDEN's longest song until 2015's "Empire Of The Clouds", but it is neither a second too long or too short. The basis for Harris's exquisite and successfully operatic experiment, written in a relatively short period of time, was Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 626-line poem of the same name from 1798 about a cursed sailor's sin and redemption, summarily narrated in a song filled with drama and incorporating lines from the actual poem. The music is designed to perfectly complement events narrated in a given part of the poem (here rewritten and rearranged for the purposes of the song. The rocking vertigo of the driving melody and beat form the backbone of the song, frantic guitars announce Death's descent on the mariner's ship, the atmospheric, spooky mid-section imagines a still, moonlit sea surrounded by death or nature's indifference, and an otherworldly scream precipitates the torrents of rain the mariner must endure as part of his punishment. Simply one of the greatest songs ever written, the track does full justice to its inspiration and is a true work of art in its own right. It sets imaginations ablaze and encouraging many a schoolboy to further explore the worlds of Coleridge and literature more broadly. This is central to what makes IRON MAIDEN special and a rare feat for a heavy metal band, justly ennobling them to the status of 'thinking man's heavy metal'.

Released on 3 September 1984, IRON MAIDEN narrowly missed the top slot in the British charts with "Powerslave". But the ensuing "World Slavery Tour" was the most extensive in Maiden's history and rushed the band around the world over eleven months with an astounding 189 concerts performed, the gigantic set design and stage effects making the tour the most elaborate and spectacular in the band's history. Taking advantage of the political thaw in Eastern Europe, IRON MAIDEN started the tour in Poland, also playing in Hungary and Yugoslavia. The enthusiasm of fans in these then communist countries so impressed the band that they released a video EP, "Behind The Iron Curtain", which featured behind the scenes footage from those visits alongside promos and live material. Even more noteworthy was IRON MAIDEN's appearance at the first Rock in Rio supporting headliners QUEEN in front of an estimated 300,000-strong crowd, a high-octane performance in which Dickinson would accidentally split his head open but which would help break South America for the band.

The length of the "World Slavery Tour" made it clear, though, that it would be impossible to maintain the rhythm of releasing a new studio album every year. Thus, the idea of the seminal live album "Live After Death" was born in the planning phase of the tour, in order to bridge the year 1985 in terms of the release gap. Like everything IRON MAIDEN, this venture was to be bigger and more spectacular than that of any other band. Long Beach Arena in California was chosen as the location for the recordings, where the band played four consecutive evenings in March 1985 to the 13,000-capacity venue. Dickinson's "Scream for me, Long Beach!" has since become the most famous battle cry in metal history. Material from these recordings was used for the first three sides of the album, with recordings from the four concerts at the London Hammersmith Odeon from October 1984 used for side four. Martin Birch did not use overdubs, concentrating on perfectly capturing the live atmosphere and power of IRON MAIDEN instead. A video for "Live After Death" was also recorded at Long Beach Arena and was released together with its audio counterpart in October 1985. *(rp/gl)*

"SOMEWHERE IN TIME"

1986

Following the first extended breather of their career, IRON MAIDEN went back into album mode in early 1986 to write "Somewhere In Time". The break, however, proved to be too short for a burned-out Bruce Dickinson. What ensued was a songwriting crisis that manifested itself in considerations of acoustic songs in the vein of LED ZEPPELIN. The others rejected these, and Dickinson would end up having no songwriting credits on the album at all. "Somewhere In Time" continued to propel the band forward, however, with Adrian Smith moving into the fore to write the album's highlights, together with a state-of-the-art modern sound that still stands the test of time.

The disappointment from the events of 1986 were probably at the root of the frontman's later exit from the band in 1993. The band leader Steve Harris's somewhat conservative reaction to Dickinson's new stylistic orientation left a particular bad taste. Indeed, Harris would become increasingly conservative in his writing in the years ahead, while Dickinson would branch out beyond heavy metal after his departure from IRON MAIDEN. "I felt we had to come up with our 'Physical Graffiti' or our 'Led Zeppelin IV', that we had to get it onto another level, or we'd stagnate and just drift away. It wasn't so much that it had to be acoustic; I just felt we should be leading, not following," Dickinson said of his thinking at the time. But on "Somewhere In Time", Adrian Smith stepped up to the plate, composing on his own for the first time and immediately booking both the album's singles on the strength of his material, namely "Wasted Years" and "Stranger In A Strange Land". He also composed a third song on the album, the equally exceptional "Sea Of Madness".

Displaying a massive sound and superb production from Martin Birch that still sounds fresh to this day, the big innovation in Maiden's sound on "Somewhere In Time" was guitar synths, which had just reached a new level of technical development in 1986, turning them from playful gimmick into authentic musical tool. IRON MAIDEN thereby rejected their "no synthesizers" credo and, together with JUDAS PRIEST with their album "Turbo" (which, incidentally, like "Somewhere In Time", was recorded at Compass Point Studios), were regarded as the pioneers of guitar synths in heavy metal. Smith and Murray skilfully manipulated their new tools, opening up a new facet of sound in the band's already very sophisticated soundscape. In retrospect, an adaptation of some of the songs on "Powerslave" (especially the title track and "Rime Of The Ancient Mariner") with this new technique could have been deeply appealing, since these songs were in line with the overall compositional direction of the "Somewhere In Time" material.

Album opener and title track "Caught Somewhere In Time" is preceded by a short synth overture that sets the atmosphere for the mini-science fiction opera to come. The tried and tested galloping rhythm embodied by "The Trooper" is again employed for the driving rhythm, representing a link between past and future, but the song is so fast it's likely Harris and cohorts had been paying attention to the exploding thrash scene at the time. The lavishly expansive guitar duel in the mid-section is easily on par with Smith and Murray's best performances to that point, showcasing their vitality and versatility, and both players in their prime. Smith's "Wasted Years" is the only song on the album without synths and, with its unforgettable chorus, is probably the most radio-friendly song of the band's entire career. The reflective, somewhat melancholic, but also upbeat lyrics about missed opportunities and days of past illuminates the topic of time in a manner totally contrary to the title track. The two songs thus result in an interesting contrasting but lyrical unity. All the songs on the album would touch on the concept of time and space in one way or another, of course, without it being a concept album per se. From a guitarist's point of view, the pedal point with the sustained note marking the harmony and creating dissonant resonance in the ingenious opening riff of "Wasted Years" is certainly unforgettable.

"Sea Of Madness" captivates the listener with the most massive bass sound in IRON MAIDEN history, which contributes to the brutality of the main riff. The track is also a lesson to all rhythm sections in heavy metal, with Harris and McBrain playing as tightly and as united as if they were Siamese twins. Special attention should also be given to Smith's simply transcendental solo with the whole band firing on all cylinders behind him. This is possibly the greatest single moment on the whole album. "Heaven Can Wait" takes its title (but little else) from the 1978 film starring Warren Beatty and is about the out-of-body experience some who have been resuscitated from death report to have had. This song would become a staple of future concerts and an IRON MAIDEN classic, the tradition beginning on the "Somewhere On Tour" world tour of bringing friends,

TRACKLIST

1. Caught Somewhere In Time
2. Wasted Years
3. Sea Of Madness
4. Heaven Can Wait
5. The Loneliness Of The Long Distance Runner
6. Stranger In A Strange Land
7. Deja-Vu
8. Alexander The Great

SINGLES

Photo: Warner

(From left) McBrain, Harris, Dickinson, Murray, Smith

On "Somewhere In Time" Adrian Smith stepped up to the plate, composing on his own for the first time and immediately booking both the album's singles on the strength of his material, namely "Wasted Years" and "Stranger In A Strange Land".

fans, and crew members out on stage for the midsection football-like crowd singalong. To this day, an invitation to do so is considered the highest honour a fan can receive.

"The Loneliness Of The Long Distance Runner" was based on the short story by Alan Sillitoe (who also wrote the screenplay for the resulting film) which, besides the motivation it might provide for the sportily inclined, is a testament to the determination necessary to achieve any life goal no matter the obstacles, an attitude reflected in and of great consequence to Harris himself. Borrowing its title from Robert Heinlein's magnum opus of the same name, Smith's "Stranger In A Strange Land" employs guitar synths reminiscent of the title track, and is a rousing mid-tempo pounder inspired by the exhumation of the body of explorer John Torrington, who was almost perfectly preserved in permafrost for over a century following a failed mission to Antarctica. The ethereal and deeply atmospheric track was made even more multidimensional by its independent vocal phrasing. It is certainly one of Smith's greatest and most memorable compositions.

The self-explanatory "Deja-Vu" was the only song not written by Harris or Smith, as it stands as the album's only Harris and Murray collaboration. Given the impact of the other tracks it remains as the album's least interesting song musically, and the only slight disappointment on an album otherwise full of classics. "Alexander The Great" is another Harris epic about the life of the legendary Greek general which contains a lot of progressive rhythm changes, Harris this time offering up a history lesson in lieu of literature. Though the song impressively conjures up sweeping imagery of Alexander's army marching into and conquering Darius III's Achaemenid empire, it doesn't quite match the completeness of "Rime Of The Ancient Mariner" (though what could?). Nonetheless an enjoyable song for that matter.

The best B-sides in the band's career were also crafted in parallel to the superb album material. "Juanita", which was recorded without Harris and Murray (Smith plays guitars and bass) leads the pack, with the first-rate, radio oriented "Reach Out" (featuring Smith, a more than able singer, on vocals) and "That Girl" not very far behind. All three songs arose from spoof band THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF HACKNEY, with which McBrain and Smith kept themselves busy outside of Maiden and which was also to become the nucleus for Smith's later solo LP, A.S.A.P's "Silver And Gold". But most notably, the band recorded a 'tribute' to their legendary manager Rod Smallwood, a delightful and absolutely hilarious song by the title of "The Sheriff Of Huddersfield" in which they poke fun at Smallwood, his mannerisms, and his recent decision at the time to move to Los Angeles (the music is based on an URCHIN song, "Life In The City").

"Somewhere In Time" also offered up probably the best IRON MAIDEN album cover art of all, with a cyborg Eddie and an impressive "Blade Runner" backdrop featuring almost countless amusing and interesting details. Derek Riggs drew over 40 inscriptions, optical gags, and Easter Eggs related to the band's history into a stunning work of art that fans around the world doubtless spent joyous hours trying to find and decipher. Although the album again failed to reach the prestigious top position in the UK charts, reaching #3 (and #11 in the US), "Somewhere In Time" is one of IRON MAIDEN's best-selling records. The album had a long commercial shelf life, particularly in the US, and was the band's first release to go multi-platinum there.

On the "Somewhere On Tour" tour, which kicked off prior to the album's release on 29 September 1986, wisdom gained from past torments on the road was taken into account. "Somewhere on Tour" would be shorter than the "World Slavery Tour" and included longer breaks in between. IRON MAIDEN remained one of the busiest bands in the business and performed an impressive 151 concerts in nine months, averaging a show every two days. "The Loneliness Of The Long Distance Runner" had the sad distinction of being performed just once and was discarded immediately after the first show of the tour in Belgrade. The setlist featured five songs from the new album, making it one of the most interesting yet, not least because many would never or rarely be played again, making bootlegs from the tour especially interesting to collectors. On this tour, Eddie appeared on stage as an oversized cyborg from the album cover, one of the coolest outfits in his eventful history. Even more brilliantly, he appeared a second time as a giant inflatable head beneath McBrain's drum set, lifting him and his drum riser to the rafters as it rose from beneath the stage, inflatable hands on either side of the stage acting as platforms for Dickinson and Harris. The stage show for this tour may even have outdone the enormous mummified Eddie from the "World Slavery Tour". *(rp/gl)*

"SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON"

1988

IRON MAIDEN clinically christened their seventh studio album "Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son", which was recorded at Musicland Studios in Munich, the same facility QUEEN employed for several of their mid-80's works. Many fans thought they saw in it a concept album in the wake of QUEENSRŸCHE's monumental "Operation: Mindcrime", released that same year, but the band originally denied that in interviews. Only in retrospect did the myth of a pre-planned concept grow because of the album's many related and intertwining concepts – and was eventually buttressed for commercial reasons by Steve Harris and his band mates. However, the concept, such as it is, has to this day not been conclusively explained. Nevertheless, "Seventh Son" remains, to many an older fan, IRON MAIDEN's finest hour.

The broader notion of a 'seventh son of a seventh son" stems from Irish and other folklores, and the title track itself likely originates from Harris's reading of the Orson Scott Card novel "Seventh Son", published the year before and whose protagonist is the eponymous seventh son who possesses magical powers to create and shape things around him and thus, foretell the future. Interestingly, that novel features a character, the "Taleswapper", who is supposed to be an incarnation of Victorian poet William Blake, who would also be the subject of Bruce Dickinson's finest solo album, "The Chemical Wedding", released in 1997. (When quizzed about this by the co-author of this piece, Dickinson responded that he had sought to correct the conceptual shortcomings of "Seventh Son" with "The Chemical Wedding" and to create a more deliberately conceptual album inspired by Blake's visions). With some creative license, side B of "Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son" may be interpreted as a continuous story, but the album's overall high musical standard does not detract from the fact that the songs can be enjoyed in isolation as individual pieces.

Furious and furtive album opener "Moonchild" starts with a powerful synth intro reminiscent of "Caught Somewhere In Time", setting the epic direction for the album to come. The song is based on occultist Aleister Crowley's novel of the same name about a war between 'white' and 'black' magicians over the fate of an unborn child. It also showcases how the biggest difference with this album's predecessor is that the band is almost never let off its leash. It feels as if the artists were playing within a clinically controlled, progressive framework, no matter how fast the pace. To that end, "Infinite Dreams" truly is a progressive masterpiece, beginning as an uneasy half-ballad that builds up into a heavy mid-section rhythmically before descending into high-speed metal madness in parallel with the enveloping nightmares being described in the lyrics. These also address weighty existential and metaphysical questions, with Dickinson narrating disturbing visions of the afterlife and a fear of being imprisoned in the dream forever. "Children Of The Damned" may be considered a historical predecessor, but the sheer perfection of "Infinite Dreams" demonstrated just how much further the band had progressed in just six years.

The first single outing "Can I Play With Madness" surprises with its polyphonic choirs and almost pop orientation. If Harris complained that IRON MAIDEN had been painted into a commercial corner in the US because of the oncoming wave of thrash metal popularity, then he himself was partly to blame with this track (co-written with Smith and Dickinson) – and it is also one of the few IRON MAIDEN songs that do not work well live. The situation is quite the contrary with "The Evil That Men Do", the album's second single, which not only contains some of Dickinson's finest lyrics ("Love is a razor and I walked the line on that silver blade..."), but was one of the undisputed highlights in the live set of the ensuing "Seventh Tour Of A Seventh Tour", and has been in the setlist ever since. The title is borrowed from the lines delivered by Marc Antony in William Shakespeare's play "Julius Caesar": "The evil that men do lives after them; The good is oft interred with their bones", and the lyrics explore this notion in various ways thematically.

TRACKLIST

1. Moonchild
2. Infinite Dreams
3. Can I Play With Madness
4. The Evil That Men Do
5. Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son
6. The Prophecy
7. The Clairvoyant
8. Only The Good Die Young

SINGLES

With Manichean concepts running throughout the album and addresses why earthly power usually ends up being wielded on behalf of evil. In summary, "Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son" was possibly IRON MAIDEN's strongest album to date, with absolutely no shortcomings in the songwriting department.

Harris's haunting, almost ten-minute title track is a stylistic continuation of "Alexander The Great", with its epic instrumental section lasting well over half the track and featuring numerous progressive rhythm changes, but it was arguably closer in narrative structure to "Rime Of The Ancient Mariner". "The Prophecy" was a rare contribution from Dave Murray, who wrote the song with Harris. This time, in contrast to "Quest For Fire" from "Piece Of Mind", the band put the 6/8 time signature to effective use. Dickinson was also amazed with some of the blues references in the vocal melody, and the change of bar to the straight vocal line is equally convincing. "The Clairvoyant", the album's third single and a song inspired lyrically by the death of British psychic Doris Stokes, is possibly the album's strongest (on an album chock full of strong compositions). Harris had been led to ponder whether Stokes could truly foresee her own future – would she not then also have foreseen her own death? This provided a strong foundation for concluding the Seventh Son's narrative, as it were, but also for asking further metaphysical questions about the nature of consciousness and existence, themes undergirding the album as a whole and lending themselves to the notion of a 'concept album'. "Seventh Son" concludes with the galloping "Only The Good Die Young", which again references Manichean concepts running throughout the album and addresses why earthly power usually ends up being wielded on behalf of evil. In summary, "Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son" was possibly IRON MAIDEN's strongest album to date, with absolutely no shortcomings in the songwriting department.

"Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son" also marked Dickinson's return to the band's songwriting edifice, and while Harris co-wrote seven of the eight songs (fittingly, given the album's title) and thus took the lead. The tracks featuring Dickinson's and Adrian Smith's credits alongside Harris's remain among the strongest in the band's history. Smith had obviously particularly motivated Harris with his outstanding performance on "Somewhere In Time", but keyboard synthesizers now replaced guitar synths, with Smith mostly tasked with this less virtuoso but still effective work. For live performances, Harris's bass tech Michael Kenney was promoted to keyboard player. The "Seventh Son" Eddie was arguably a step down from the opulent "Somewhere In Time" cover art, with the band mascot converted into something resembling an oversized candle holder in an arctic landscape, but that concept lent itself well to the live stage set.

"Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son" was released on 11 April 1988, and stormed to the top of the UK album charts, for the first time since "The Number Of The Beast". "Can I Play With Madness" even reached #3 on the singles charts with its amusing video clip, thus becoming the band's first bona fide hit single. The "The Evil That Men Do" single was no less sensational, going to #5. Sales slumped, however, in the US, which even a respectable performance of #12 on the Billboard 200 could not hide. It seems to be one of the many inexplicable peculiarities of the music business that these two markets have always reacted in opposite directions to IRON MAIDEN albums.

The "Seventh Tour Of A Seventh Tour" was comprised of 102 concerts, of which two stuck out in particular. IRON MAIDEN headlined the Donington Monsters of Rock festival for the first time and gave a triumphant performance, while KISS were special guests, a notion Gene Simmons had previously rejected as impossible. The open-air festival was unfortunately overshadowed by a tragic accident during the GUNS N' ROSES set, where a mad rush to the stage in the 100,000 strong crowd cost the lives of two fans (there were also serious riots in the run-up to the Schweinfurt edition of Monsters of Rock on the same tour). Meanwhile, the two nights at the Birmingham N.E.C. towards the conclusion of the tour were recorded for the "Maiden England" VHS, edited and produced by Harris and released the following year, and from which the album's fourth single, "Infinite Dreams", was culled.

The band took a break in 1989, which Smith took advantage of to pursue solo activities. Following the enjoyable experience he had had in 1985 with THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF HACKNEY, he asked Maiden drummer and good mate Nicko McBrain to continue on a more serious project, but McBrain was getting married at the time and thus had little time to spare. So Smith put together a band with his former URCHIN colleagues Andy Barnett, Dave Colwell and Richard Young, with Zak Starkey, son of THE BEATLES legend Ringo Starr, occupying the drum stool. The ensuing album "Silver And Gold" by the band, now called A.S.A.P. (short for ADRIAN SMITH AND PROJECT) musically didn't have much to do with IRON MAIDEN, but was an enjoyable and well executed AOR romp. But after a short promotional tour, the band broke up. Zak Starkey would then reappear with OASIS and THE WHO, but Adrian Smith would disappear from the scene for a long time to come. *(rp/gl)*

"NO PRAYER FOR THE DYING"

1990

Like Adrian Smith, Bruce Dickinson was gripped by solo album fever during IRON MAIDEN's 1989 sojourn. Dickinson had been offered the opportunity to contribute a song to the soundtrack for the film "A Nightmare On Elm Street 5: The Dream Child". To this end, he brought in his old drinking mate Janick Gers, with whom he quickly wrote "Bring Your Daughter... To The Slaughter" – with big consequences to follow ...

The collaboration between the two quickly grew into the album "Tattooed Millionaire", recorded in London's Battery Studios by top producer Chris Tsangarides. The catchy title track, the epic "Son Of A Gun", the nostalgic "Born in '58", and the bawdy 'submarine' tune "Dive! Dive! Dive!" were all good and catchy songs, but would not have worked within the framework of IRON MAIDEN. Notably, the originally recorded version of "Bring Your Daughter... To The Slaughter" never made it onto the album that hit shelves on 8 May 1990 – because Steve Harris had asked Dickinson to reserve the song for IRON MAIDEN.

The IRON MAIDEN lead had issued the marching order of "back to the roots" for their next record. Harris wanted more orientation towards the first two Di'Anno albums. He wanted the songs written and recorded quickly, and wanted to eliminate synths so as to bring IRON MAIDEN back to the garage sound of their early days. This back-to-basics (or backwards-looking, depending on how one sees it) philosophy met with little enthusiasm from Adrian Smith, who wanted more time for composition. Smith packed his bags after a few less than inspired attempts at writing. Upon his departure, dirty laundry was aired, with Harris accusing Smith of no longer being 100% committed to the band and suggesting that his departure would therefore not be a great loss (an assumption which turned out to be a fundamental misjudgement).

While the songwriting may not live up to the epic glories of yesteryear, and the lyrical subject matter veers between armchair social commentary and bawdy, barely disguised sexual allusion – a far cry from the usual lofty literary, historical and fantastical topics that were IRON MAIDEN's hallmark. This had been Harris's point: to bring the band back down to earth.

Finding a suitable replacement presented the boys in IRON MAIDEN with a problem well-known in the music business. The new guy had to be someone the band's age, with the same background, and from the same scene, to keep the band going without slowing down. And thus, Harris suggested Dickinson's new partner in crime Gers, who met all of these criteria. Born on 27 January 1957, in Hartlepool in the northeast of England, Gers had first cut his teeth with WHITE SPIRIT, a band belonging to the inner circle of the NWOBHM and which was represented on the second "Metal For Muthas" sampler. Gers then joined Ian Gillan's backing band, where he recorded two albums: "Double Trouble" (1981) and "Magic" (1982), but DEEP PURPLE's Mark II reunion in 1984 ended this commitment. He was then part of GOGMAGOG, Jonathan King's name-dropping IRON MAIDEN petri dish project with Clive Burr and Paul Di'Anno, and also worked with ex-MARILLION singer FISH. Gers was on the verge of quitting the music business altogether when Dickinson's offer to collaborate on his solo outing pulled his feet out of the fire.

Meanwhile, Harris ordered the Rolling Stones Mobile Studio into his Barnyard home studio at his Essex property, and the band produced an album that for the first time in IRON MAIDEN history may have deserved the epithet of "superfluous", at least by comparison to all their previous works. The new direction proved to be something of a dead end creatively and resulted in relatively superficial songs – by IRON MAIDEN standards –

TRACKLIST

1. Tailgunner
2. Holy Smoke
3. No Prayer For The Dying
4. Public Enema Number One
5. Fates Warning
6. The Assassin
7. Run Silent Run Deep
8. Hooks In You
9. Bring Your Daughter... To The Slaughter
10. Mother Russia

SINGLES

as well as a deliberate reduction in sound quality.

While the songwriting may not live up to the epic glories of yesteryear, and the lyrical subject matter veers between armchair social commentary and bawdy, barely disguised sexual allusion resembled a far cry from the usually lofty literary, historical and fantastical topics that were IRON MAIDEN's hallmark. Harris's knew what to do, he had to bring the band back down to earth. With

Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

the tectonic plates about to shift in the world of rock with the imminent arrival of grunge that would almost spell the death of heavy metal, this was perhaps just as well. The band saw a new beginning for a new decade. Most notably, though, it would also presage a shift in the band's sound for the rest of it, a somewhat less welcome proposition in retrospect.

Album opener "Tailgunner" is a kind of sequel to "Aces High" but is more understated and different in spirit and tempo to the original, thus making it more of a companion piece in IRON MAIDEN's compendium of 'boy's own' tales of aviation, wartime, and heroism. A bass line from Harris opens the song with a sense of early-morning anticipation of take-off for war, and the track explodes into a tight formation of terse bass lines, sprightly solos and machine gun drums narrating the glory of battles in the skies. The "Biggles meets Dr. Strangelove" narrative is carried forward by Dickinson's infectious enthusiasm, making the track a fan favourite from the album that also went down well live. First single "Holy Smoke", which addresses televangelist scandals and monetised religion with mocking, rocking lyrics that in no uncertain terms ridicule the subject matter, is the intended breath of fresh air in terms of the band's standards. "This is about TV preachers and the various lies they tell and I just had this big image of all those ovens in the death camps with the preachers' feet sticking out and holy smoke going up," the cerebral Dickinson explained.

The song is also notable for being in a major key and being short and straightforward, with fiery guitar solos that make efficient use of artificial harmonics, sweep picking and tapping.

Title track "No Prayer For The Dying" is an introspective half-ballad from Harris with an agreeable melody and "the best vocals on the album", according to Dickinson, albeit falling far short of the epics of yore. But sorely underrated deep cuts "Public Enema Number One" and "Fates Warning" speed things up again, rounding out the first half of the album, notably both co-written by Dave Murray. The former features a more classic IRON MAIDEN twin guitar sound and an alluring tempo change in the chorus, with Dickinson sounding particularly vicious on political hypocrisy about climate change (the 'enema' in question appears to be a reference to the public continually getting shafted from behind). "Fates Warning" somewhat echoes "Total Eclipse" in its cataclysmic subject matter and fits together well thematically with "Public Enema ...": according to Dickinson, "[t]his is about feeling secure when everyone's life can hang by a thread. You can go anytime and who knows why or how?"

On side B, "The Assassin", a rather poor cousin to the sublime "Killers", nevertheless opens with a nice atmospheric intro, and has an interesting choppy rhythmic structure when the chords come in. "Run Silent Run Deep" is based on the novel by Edward L. Beach and 1958 movie of the same name about WWII submarine warfare in the Pacific, again reflecting Dickinson's apparent love for submarines. Things pick up with the quasi-tandem of "Hooks In You", Smith's last song and almost certainly the catchiest on the album, it also being in a major key and the most radio-friendly, and a re-recorded, dirtier version of the aforementioned "Bring Your Daughter... To The Slaughter". Both songs represent a salacious variety lyrically, as if, in one sense, to emphasise a return to the band's roots. Finally, "Mother Russia" comes closest to being the album's resident "epic", but falls somewhat short by comparison to previous efforts. Nevertheless, it's an adequate song with a good topical lyric, sandwiched upon its composition between a year after the fall of the Berlin wall and a year before the fall of the USSR itself.

"No Prayer For The Dying", released on 1 October 1990, debuted at #2 on the British charts thanks to the Maiden faithful, who also – however improbably - made "Bring Your Daughter ... To The Slaughter" the band's first (and so far, only) #1 single that December, knocking CLIFF RICHARD's Christmas single off the top spot, to no doubt many a metalhead's delight. A guerrilla tactic organised by manager Rod Smallwood, with several different special formats and fliers previewing the single's release at concerts on the UK leg of the tour proved to be helpful, as collectively it caused enthusiastic fans to storm music carriers, some doubtlessly buying multiple versions. The single B-sides are all great fun this time, with covers of STRAY, FREE, LED ZEPPELIN and GOLDEN EARRING songs, the latter's "Kill Me Ce Soir" being particularly interesting.

The "No Prayer On The Road" tour was another surprise, with its stripped-down club setting and choice of smaller venues. Instead of the theatrical and grandiose stage designs of years past, towers of amplifiers now served as the backdrop. Gers, who had no songwriting credits on the album, proved to be an adequate partner for Murray live, but played a supporting role on that tour, as opposed to an equal co-conspirator as Smith had been. Gers might also have cared to invest a few hours into practicing Smith's original solos, the lack of which rubbed some older fans the wrong way. His stage antics were appreciated, but the newcomer no doubt wanted to establish his own identity on stage and would soon be accepted by the fans. A young English band named WOLFSBANE opened on the UK leg of the tour, which would lead to the fateful encounter with vocalist Blaze Bayley.

Irrespective of its intentions, "No Prayer For The Dying" is probably best summarised by the fact that "Bring Your Daughter... To The Slaughter" was the only song to remain in IRON MAIDEN's long-term live setlist, last being played in 2003. More importantly, the album was to presage a semi-permanent change in the band's sound – and not always for the better. Nevertheless, as one of the least-liked IRON MAIDEN albums, it retains a soft spot in the hearts of hard-core fans, it being a bit like a nasty hangover from the glories of the '80's – but from a fun night out nevertheless. *(gl/rp)*

"FEAR OF THE DARK"

1992

"Fear Of The Dark" was IRON MAIDEN's first album to be recorded digitally for the CD format and not only for vinyl. This was evident from its total playing time of almost 58 minutes. While many bands encountered difficulties making the transition to digital, the boys in Maiden came up with motivated and consistently good song material after the mediocre "No Prayer For The Dying" album and made the switch effortlessly. Meanwhile, Steve Harris's barn had been converted into a real studio, and although this was the first time he was co-credited as the producer of an IRON MAIDEN album, Martin Birch also appeared to have awoken from hibernation. The overall sound was still some way from the prodigious productions of the 1980's, but the quality curve was inching upwards again.

Lead single "Be Quick Or Be Dead" was a more than worthy up-tempo album opener, once again attacking greed and corruption, specifically targeting infamous media proprietor Robert Maxwell, who had stolen millions of pounds from his own companies' pension funds prior to his suspect death in 1991. Next was the pleasing, by-the-numbers rocker "From Here To Eternity", also the album's second single. A song about Charlotte the Harlot riding with the Devil (or is it Eddie?), which is more genuine fun than the half-smut on the previous album. Atmospheric half-ballad "Afraid To Shoot Strangers" gets back to serious business, a song about the horrors of war narrated from the first person perspective of a soldier in the then-recent first Gulf War with searching lyrics imagining the soldier's mental state. It was also a commentary on the war being televised: people watched the Gulf War at home on TV, as Harris observed, "but instead of bringing them closer to the reality of war, it seemed to take them even further away. It became like a computer game ..." This would be the first of a number of similar songs the following years, but it's the best one of the lot.

Janick Gers, who by now had fully come into his own as a songwriter within the band, was able to live out his Blackmore side on the excellent, Kashmir-esque "Fear Is The Key" with homages to DEEP PURPLE's "Perfect Strangers". Dickinson provided an insightful lyric on the AIDS pandemic inspired by the death of Freddie Mercury, which had affected Dickinson personally. "Childhood's End" initially exhibits a "Powerslave" vibe but remains a powerful, searching song throughout, the title and concept perhaps being a premonition of what Harris was about to go through personally. "Wasting Love" was a holdover from Dickinson and Gers's "Tattooed Millionaire" sessions, which, donned in IRON MAIDEN garb, became a tasteful ballad – the band's first, in the true sense of the word – with Dickinson in top form. It was also the album's third single. Lyrically, the song reflects the mature stance that love is worth more than endless random sexual encounters, which eventually consume a person with emptiness rather than fulfilment.

"The Fugitive", was based on the 1963 television series and essentially owes its existence to the changeover to CD format. Although it is a passable track buy by IRON MAIDEN standards, it is nothing more than filler. However, the excellent "Chains Of Misery", the first of two collaborations between Dickinson and Dave Murray, pushes the quality to usual heights. With its captivating gang vocal chorus and superb lyrics it is a delight to listen to. "The Apparition" slows the pace a bit, but is practically a study in the developing unison between Harris and Gers, who would turn out to be very similar-minded songwriters. Listening to the track makes it easy to imagine the two developing the lightning-fast riff storm in the guitar/bass doubling while jamming. This sets up "Judas Be My Guide", the absolute highlight of the album and the second Dickinson/Murray collaboration, delivered with more conviction and passion than anything else on the album. Unfortunately, the song never received the attention it deserved, as it represents a logical musical continuation of "Only The Good Die Young" and should have at least earned a place in the live set, for which it was clearly intended. In the sound guise of "Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son" production values, it might even have become a bona fide classic.

"Weekend Warrior" takes up the theme of hooliganism in British football. Musically, the song is rather average, pointing towards how the album would have been better served and perhaps even rank as a classic had the band cut two songs from the

TRACKLIST

1. Be Quick Or Be Dead
2. From Here To Eternity
3. Afraid To Shoot Strangers
4. Fear Is The Key
5. Childhood's End
6. Wasting Love
7. The Fugitive
8. Chains Of Misery
9. The Apparition
10. Judas Be My Guide
11. Weekend Warrior
12. Fear Of The Dark

SINGLES

Dickinson had decided to leave IRON MAIDEN. Although the band was crestfallen, the frontman could not be dissuaded, but agreed to complete the remaining part of the tour.

tracklist and used them as B-sides instead. The album fittingly concludes with the title track, the album's resident epic tailored to perfection for live performances. The subsequent live tour and live recordings gave testament to its power, with the song containing multiple singalong passages allowing Dickinson to conduct rapturous crowds to ecstasy. Inspired by Harris's actual fear of the dark during childhood, it is used as a metaphor for fear of losing control and being sucked into the vortex when confronted with difficult times. The pulsating bass lines in the verses almost literally stimulate the subconscious with its intimations of danger, even when nothing seems to be obviously afoot. "It's about being scared but not really knowing what of," Harris explained in 1992. "They say that everyone has a secret fear of something, they just don't always know what it is – until it's too late."

Eerily, Harris may have been having subconscious premonitions about the difficult years ahead for IRON MAIDEN, for substantive changes were afoot that would culminate in the greatest shock to Harris's and the band's career. For the first time, IRON MAIDEN dispensed with the services of Derek Riggs for the artwork, following manager Rod Smallwood ideas of "shaking things up". Artwork was subsequently awarded to Melvyn Grant instead, who contributed a gnarling tree demon Eddie. While not a bad rendering of the mascot, this was arguably the start of a series of below-par album and single covers, at least by comparison. Either way, this had no impact on success in the UK. For the third time in the band's history, IRON MAIDEN reached the top of the UK charts with the album that hit shelves on 11 May 1992, with the lead single "Be Quick Or Be Dead" reaching #2 on the singles chart. No mean feat considering the ferocity of the number. In the US, though, the album marked an almost terminal decline, going to #12 on the Billboard 200 but not even reaching gold certification status despite all other albums achieving this accolade. A return to Donington was to be the highlight of the "Fear Of The Dark" tour. The band played an acclaimed concert to an estimated 75,000 punters, with Adrian Smith invited on stage to guest on the encore, "Running Free".

The tour would serve as the basis for two new releases, namely an album with older song material from IRON MAIDEN's inception up until "Powerslave" ("A Real Dead One"), and another with newer songs from "Somewhere In Time" up to the current release ("A Real Live One"). In order to avoid having to wait to begin work on the live albums until the end of the tour, a longer break during the middle of the tour was planned in order for Harris to review the previously recorded material. This lasted from the beginning of November 1992 until the end of March 1993, when the "A Real Live One" album was released, and the tour was to continue under the title of "A Real Live Tour". During this fateful period, Dickinson went back to pursuing his own musical path, entering a studio in Los Angeles together with the guys from the band SKIN and with well-established producer Keith Olsen. Work on the next solo album proved difficult, in part to the fact that Dickinson was effectively recording three different albums. Ultimately, he had to make the decision to leave IRON MAIDEN.

Although the band was crestfallen, the frontman could not be dissuaded, but he agreed to complete the remaining part of the tour. In March 1993, fans and the press were informed of the devastating news. The remaining concerts would be very melancholic due to Dickinson's imminent departure but would nevertheless be special, with the live resurrection of ancient classics that were only performed at certain venues. This would be an absolute highlight for the fans who travelled from concert to concert to benefit from the varied setlists, and to say goodbye to their hero as many times as possible.

The two live albums, released in March 1993 ("A Real Live One") and October 1993 ("A Real Dead One") respectively, resulted in nothing short of a disaster. This was largely to attributed to the absence of Martin Birch, and the first IRON MAIDEN release since "Killers" that was absolutely unacceptable in terms of production quality. In contrast to "Live After Death", the band sounded completely neutered, and this would be the unfortunate start of a period of Harris dictating production values that didn't do the band any justice, live or in the studio. In addition, "Live At Donington", a recording of the 1992 Monsters of Rock performance was released in November 1993, completing the release overkill but which was at least of marginally better sound quality. With a good dose of panic consuming the Maiden camp, the market was quickly flooded with obvious cash-in goodies before the biggest makeover in the band's history would soon ensue.

Following the first fruitless attempts with Keith Olsen, Bruce Dickinson teamed up with Roy Z to record "Balls To Picasso", resulting in the presentation of Dickinson in a completely novel, non-metal way. "Balls To Picasso", released in June 1994, was a difficult-to-categorise album encompassing manifold styles, overwhelming reviewers at the time as a musical bag of tricks they didn't know how to make heads or tails of. Fate would show that Dickinson's more open mind would ultimately be key to saving IRON MAIDEN, in the longer run. But for the time being, the inimitable frontman was on a journey of self-discovery. *(rp/gl)*

THE STORY OF

"EDDIE THE 'EAD"

No mascot in heavy metal is as strongly associated with the sound and image of a band as IRON MAIDEN's "Eddie The Head". Sure, aficionados of harder music will be acquainted with Vic Rattlehead (MEGADETH), Snaggletooth (MOTÖRHEAD), or Murray (DIO), but the role these mascots play in the context of their respective bands is a far cry from the degree to which Eddie has defined the image of IRON MAIDEN on album covers and all their merchandising for four decades – and not least on stage.

Credit for the birth of "Eddie the 'Ead" (the "H" is usually swallowed up by the band members' East London accent) is not without controversy, since different elements of what is associated with him today were developed independently of each other. Half way through 1979, IRON MAIDEN were becoming increasingly popular on London's underground circuit, which, in addition to the legendary "Soundhouse Tapes" affording the band exposure in clubs, was mainly due to the band's spectacular gigs in London pubs such as the Ruskin Arms.

Since the band at the time, consisting of Paul Di'Anno, Steve Harris, Dave Murray, and Doug Sampson, also wanted to make an optical impression with their live performances, they hired roadie Dave "Lights" Beazley, who turned out to be something of a secret weapon. In addition to a self-made dry ice machine, a collection of colourful lights projecting the IRON MAIDEN logo at the back of the stage, and (more or less) controlled explosions on the stage, he designed a new showpiece for the increasingly well-attended shows at the time. Lights created a threatening kabuki-type mask that was placed in the middle of the back of the stage, from the mouth of which dry ice fog and later fake blood was sprayed with the help of an aquarium pump during the lyric "See the blood flow..." from the eponymous classic "Iron Maiden". The mask was constructed under the guidance of an art student friend who made a print of Lights' face with papier-mâché, and later built in shining eyes.

Photo: Warner

The name "Eddie the 'Ead" was given to the mascot thanks to an old East End joke about a boy named Eddie that was born with a head but no body. Dave Murray recalled the legend to Mick Wall in the official IRON MAIDEN biography, "Run To The Hills": "A wife had a baby, but it was born with only a head and no body. 'Don't worry,' says the doctor. 'Bring him back in five years time, and we'll probably have a body for him'. So five years go by, and there's Eddie the 'Ead, as his parents have called him, sitting on the mantelpiece, when in walks his dad. 'Son,' he says, 'today's a very special day. It's your fifth birthday, and we've got a very special surprise for you.' 'Oh no,' says Eddie. 'Not another fucking hat!'."

The most important contribution to the final version of Eddie, though, was made by art college dropout Derek Riggs in early 1980. The always devoted and visionary band manager Rod Smallwood was looking for a more eye-catching image for IRON MAIDEN, who in his opinion were a nice, quiet bunch off-stage. Therefore, he needed a figure with enough presence to guarantee a good cover for the first album, and subsequently to allow for visual continuity. Impressed by a poster Riggs had made for jazz musician Max Middleton, Smallwood took up contact with Riggs and found the image of a crazy-looking punk monster that Riggs had hoped might land on a science fiction book cover in a portfolio of drawings. When this figure was given longer hair, the motif for the cover of the debut album "Iron Maiden" was created. The name Eddie was taken from the aforementioned stage prop and in return, the mask in the back of the stage was also adapted to the album design.

Rod Smallwood attributes the idea of a three-dimensional Eddie "performing" at concerts to the then director of the EMI record label, Rupert Perry, who is said to have suggested that Eddie be brought onto the actual stage at a concert in the early 1980's. In the beginning, Smallwood and various tour managers took turns doing this job in jeans, a leather jacket, and an Eddie mask, until Lights suggested that they use stilts to give fans a larger-than-life Eddie. This resulted in a two and a half and later even a four and a half meters-sized showcase. Starting with the cover for the first official single "Running Free" and until 1992, Derek Riggs was the exclusive designer of all representations of Eddie for music releases

Photo: Ross Halfin

Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

Photo: Geoffrey Lee

and merchandise. However, Eddie's face was only fully revealed upon release of the first album. His face was still covered by a shadow on the "Running Free" single. Attentive observers will discover some interesting graffiti on the wall behind him. AC/DC, JUDAS PRIEST, LED ZEPPELIN, SCORPIONS point to some of the band's musical influences at the time, while HAMMERS once again obviates that Steve Harris is probably the greatest West Ham United fan of all time.

Some of the Riggs-designed record sleeves caused quite a stir in the early days of IRON MAIDEN's career, especially those for the singles "Sanctuary" and "Women In Uniform", which show Eddie with the then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. On the cover of "Sanctuary" one sees the mascot with a blood-soaked knife over the "Iron Lady", who was quite unpopular for her conservative politics (not only) in music circles. She was portrayed injured or dead on the ground, covered by rags of an IRON MAIDEN poster that she appears to have been trying to tear down. But she is already back on the cover of their next single, "Women In Uniform" lurking in a corner with a submachine gun as Eddie cavorts unsuspectingly with two women on his arm. Riggs had a stroke of genius with "The Number Of The Beast" (1982), which shows the devil as Eddie's puppet, but as the devil is also pulling the strings of an Eddie puppet, it remains unclear who ultimately controls whom. Originally intended as the cover for the "Purgatory" single, Smallwood wisely commissioned a replacement image for it so as to save it for the album. The popularity of the album artwork to this day more than proves him right.

In the course of the 1980's Eddie was put through endless suffering, having had to endure a lobotomy on "Piece Of Mind" (1983) and looking anything but healthy being held down by chains. Whether as a mummified Egyptian god ("Powerslave"), a futuristic cyborg ("Somewhere In Time"), or as a torso with a flaming skull ("Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son") – Riggs always succeeded in reinventing and redefining Eddie in the context of the respective album or song. Added to that, Eddie always appeared in an equally spectacular fashion on the respective tours. For example, on the

Photo: John McMurtrie

"World Slavery Tour" in 1984, a four and a half meter tall Eddie fired fireballs from his huge, bandaged hand, while on the 1988 "Seventh Tour Of A Seventh Tour" he would cry tears of fire enthroned in the middle of an Arctic ice world.

But just as the ever-expanding stage shows were stopped from the "No Prayer On The Road" tour onwards, the band and its management decided in 1992 not to commission Riggs exclusively to design Eddie any more so as to allow for an upgrade for the 1990's. The first album cover not designed by Riggs is "Fear Of The Dark", which was designed by Melvyn Grant instead and which shows Eddie in a much darker light, gnarled together with a tree. For "The X Factor", Hugh Syme, known for his work for Canadian gods of progressive rock RUSH, created the first digitally illustrated artwork for an IRON MAIDEN album. Here, Eddie sits by turns on an electric chair or is ensnared in a brutal torture device (the latter was deemed too violent for certain markets), involuntarily drawing a parallel to the unsuccessful Blaze Bayley era.

After the reunion with Bruce Dickinson and Adrian Smith, the new studio albums presented Eddie again in a new light. We saw the warlike, post-apocalyptic "A Matter Of Life And Death" (2007) by Tim Bradstreet, who is mainly known for his cover art for Marvel's "The Punisher" comics, or Dave Patchett's "Dance Of Death", inspired by the Venice Carnival. However, the latter insisted he not be named as the creator of said artwork, since other elements were subsequently added to his original vision for the artwork without permission, or, as another source claims, because an unfinished version was mistakenly used.

Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

Finally, it remains noteworthy that in addition to all the transformations Eddie the 'Ead has undergone over the years, new imageries are constantly being thought up for the unreserved darling of all IRON MAIDEN fans, be it on music releases or T-shirts as well as on stage. Recently, he has appeared in his own video games, "Ed Hunter" and "Legacy Of The Beast". He also found himself in two comic book mini-series, and has also decorated the fuselage of Maiden's famous Boeing 757 (the "Ed Force One") which flight captain Bruce Dickinson used to fly the band, crew, and equipment to concerts around the world on the "Somewhere Back In Time" world tour. And who can forget, of course, Trooper Eddie storms beer aficionados on the labels of the "Trooper" beers from Robinsons. *(ck)*

"THE X FACTOR"

1995

Following Bruce Dickinson's departure, Steve Harris wasted no time in deciding on Blaze Bayley as the new frontman of IRON MAIDEN. Harris had come to know and appreciate Bayley as the singer of their supporting band WOLFSBANE on the "No Prayer On The Road" tour, with Bayley demonstrating a strong stage presence and displaying a pleasing quality in the character of his voice, as well as being a thoroughly decent individual. However, this choice was to be proven as the most serious misstep in the band's career.

Bayley possessed nowhere near the same vocal range as Dickinson, precluding him from the majority of the band's repertoire, and thus also precluding the band from venturing beyond a narrower register for future compositions in turn. This may account for the repetitiveness and relative lack of imagination on this and particularly the follow-up Bayley-fronted album, "Virtual XI". Though no fault of Bayley's own, IRON MAIDEN were facing the darkest period of their career. In the mid-90's heavy metal in general was at the lowest commercial and unfashionable ebb in its history, with grunge, alternative music, and rap ruling the airwaves. IRON MAIDEN themselves were insisting on a style of music and sound that wasn't going to win them any new fans or allow them to compete with other surviving big name bands like METALLICA. And finally, many fans simply weren't going to accept a replacement for Bruce Dickinson. This perfect storm ensured that "The X Factor", the band's tenth studio album, was practically doomed from the outset, which is not to suggest that it and IRON MAIDEN's Blaze Bayley-era more broadly don't have a cult of devoted fans.

Born Bayley Alexander Cooke on 29 May 1963 in Birmingham, the new singer had previously appeared on three well-received albums with WOLFSBANE ("Live Fast, Die Fast" (1989), "Down Fall The Good Guys" (1991) and "Wolfsbane"(1994). Bayley was able to secure the post in IRON MAIDEN after the multitude of audition tapes submitted by vocalists known and unknown failed to convince Harris, who appears to have had his mind set squarely on a British vocalist, thus excluding many excellent prospects. Bayley's vocal limitations were not as evident on the new songs composed for and by him, but came to light live on stage when performing inexorable classics like "Hallowed Be Thy Name", "The Trooper", or "The Evil That Men Do" (Bayley was far more at ease on Di'Anno-era material). What exactly possessed Harris, then, to choose a vocalist with a baritone range when most of the band's material is composed for a tenor is a mystery, although it's a fair bet that the bassist was holding a grudge against Dickinson for leaving in the first place and wanted to put the Dickinson era well and truly behind IRON MAIDEN. Nevertheless, there were a number of more obviously suitable candidates for the post, like Michael Kiske (ex-HELLOWEEN), John West (ex-ROYAL HUNT), or André Matos (ex-ANGRA), so the decision remains puzzling.

The reasons why the "The X Factor" fell short, however, are manifold, and Bayley is the last person who should be blamed for them. Very much Harris's understudy for the duration of his tenure in Maiden, Bayley essentially did as he was asked. If allowed to remain within his own range and his own comfort zone, Bayley demonstrated on the album and later in his solo career, that he is a perfectly adequate baritone with a warm voice. That is why it is so not understandable why Harris couldn't take simple steps such as down tuning half a step to accommodate his new vocalist. The main problem with "The X Factor", though, is the production itself. Following Dickinson's departure, Martin Birch also retired, which proved to be

Murray and Bayley

Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

TRACKLIST

1. Sign Of The Cross
2. Lord Of The Flies
3. Man On The Edge
4. Fortunes Of War
5. Look For The Truth
6. The Aftermath
7. Judgement Of Heaven
8. Blood On The World's Hands
9. The Edge Of Darkness
10. 2 A.M.
11. The Unbeliever

SINGLES

near-catastrophic for the band. "The X Factor" was produced by Harris together with engineer Nigel Green, which already demonstrated the almost total control the bassist had assumed over the band, now standing unopposed by dissenters like Dickinson and Adrian Smith (whose respective absences would be felt in the songwriting department as well). But the decision to record the album yet again at Harris's Barnyard studios, and without Birch, meant that there were now no checks and balances left on Harris, resulting in a thin, hollowed-out sound for both guitars and drums, which unfortunately would reflect badly on the better compositions on the album as well. This would also contribute greatly to putting IRON MAIDEN at a disadvantage with their competition in the mid-90's, making the band sound dated and, at times, even stale.

Album opener "Sign Of The Cross" marks the tentative return to epic form with a length of 11:18 minutes and is based on Umberto Eco's novel (and the film) "The Name of the Rose". Opening with the ominous chanting of Gregorian monks and stretching across a relatively brief vocal passage before shifting into a lengthy instrumental section, the song is essentially a progressive showcase for Harris, incorporating the habitual shifts in tempo and time signatures. By no means a slouch as far as Harris's epics go, the song would assume its full potential with Dickinson singing it live in later years upon his return, most notably on the "Rock In Rio" live set from 2001. Next up is "Lord Of The Flies", a somewhat inconspicuous mid-speed pounder based on William Golding's famous novel of the same name and the album's second single, an example of a song tailored more directly to Bayley's style. "Man On The Edge", the album's lead single and probably its best song, is an up-tempo rocker somewhat reminiscent of "Be Quick Or Be Dead" based on the excellent Joel Schumacher film "Falling Down" with Michael Douglas. Probably the defining Bayley-era IRON MAIDEN performance, the song's frantic pace with pulsating bass lines and Janick Gers's Blackmore-inspired licks is perfectly suited to showcase Bayley's voice.

From here, the album begins to dip somewhat. The moody "Fortunes Of War" is essentially a rehash of "Afraid To Shoot Strangers" from the previous album, providing yet another narrative from the soldier's point of view with a similar song structure, though with a tasteful acoustic bass underscoring the song's theme. "Look For The Truth" is probably the biggest misfire on the album, coming off as completely superfluous with an unappealing chorus that one can't help but imagine the more vocally agile Dickinson would have been able to do superior justice. Things pick up again with the rather more inspired "The Aftermath", yet another song about war but which features the best lyrics on the album and a heavy riff that accompanies Bayley perfectly, allowing him to finally bring out the full emotional spectrum of his voice. "Judgement Of Heaven" is a somewhat mediocre but still enjoyable track, of note mostly because it points towards Harris's personal troubles at the time. In the throes of a divorce, the death of his father, and still digesting Dickinson's departure, the bassist has admitted to having had a particularly dark outlook during this period of composition, something that clearly resonates throughout "The X Factor" and on this track, despite it being upbeat and essentially about regaining hope.

Had "The X Factor" remained the sole album to feature Blaze Bayley, it and the Bayley era might have been viewed more positively by posterity.

"Blood On The World's Hands" features the peculiarity of an introductory bass 'solo' that is rather rudimentary for someone of Harris's abilities, and is essentially about the wider world ignoring the war and genocide in the former Yugoslavia during the mid-1990's. It possesses a progressive and atmospheric flair and is another song well suited to Bayley's voice. This too is the case for "The Edge Of Darkness", a song based on the film "Apocalypse Now" which was in turn based on Joseph Conrad's novel "Heart of Darkness". Designed to showcase the richer aspects of Bayley's voice in the heavy build-up to the main part of the song, the track unfortunately fizzles out as it bumbles along aimlessly for too long thereafter. Thankfully it concludes on the earlier, stronger section of the song. "2AM" is a melancholic ballad describing the ruminations one may have in solitude when reflecting upon the pointlessness of work or survival for its own sake. The song has held up rather well over time and Bayley once stated that the song is autobiographical.

The album concludes on a surprising note with "The Unbeliever", an unusual track for IRON MAIDEN that in the face of too much repetition throughout the album comes as a breath of fresh air. Introspective, brooding, and self-critical, and with odd time signature changes and careening passages, the track is interesting, at a minimum. Unusually for the band, they also wrote an additional three tracks that didn't make it onto the album but which appeared as B-sides: "I Live My Way", "Justice Of The Peace", and the heavy "Judgement Day", where the album might have been better served with at least the latter in lieu of one of its weaker tracks.

It stands to reason, therefore, that the album divided fans, which didn't prevent it from entering the UK charts at #8. The situation in the US, however, was dire, with the album peaking at #147 on the Billboard 200 only to disappear immediately, marking the band's precipitous decline in that market until Dickinson's return. The album art was also a departure, featuring a more lifelike Eddie being vivisected by a torture device designed by Hugh Syme of RUSH cover art fame. The ensuing "X Factour" was a moderate success at least in European territories, which saw the core IRON MAIDEN faithful cheer on their heroes (albeit in smaller venues) and welcome Bayley with as much fervour as they could muster. Bayley, for his part, admirably gave 200%, performing adequately on Dickinson songs and especially well on his own and on songs from the Di'Anno era. Over time, his limitations were becoming plain for all to see however. Nevertheless, what he lacked in ability, he tried to make up for with infectious enthusiasm.

A pivotal album in IRON MAIDEN's career under any circumstances, there are to this day a subset of fans who rank "The X Factor" in their top 3 Maiden albums, seeing in it a progressive quasi-masterpiece. Many others still refuse to touch it, the production, repetitiveness, and lack of Bruce Dickinson being the main reasons. The consensus over 25 years later appears to be that it was a noble effort under extremely tough circumstances – both for the band and for heavy metal in general – but that it ultimately still falls short. At the time it appeared, it sounded nothing like anything IRON MAIDEN had done before, and had it remained the sole album to feature Blaze Bayley, it and the Bayley era might have been viewed more positively by posterity. (gl)

"VIRTUAL XI"

1998

Arguably the artistic nadir of IRON MAIDEN's career, "Virtual XI" would reveal a band in the throes of fatigue and at a creative dead end, largely the result of a lack of objectivity from mastermind Steve Harris, who was increasingly assuming control over all aspects of the band. Where "The X Factor" had redeeming qualities, "Virtual XI" would double down on its shortcomings, namely repetition and inadequate production. Most importantly, some of the songs on this album could easily have been salvaged with better editing and crisper production. Admittedly, the end result is not all bad, but IRON MAIDEN were at this point in the process of writing and producing themselves out of the spotlight entirely. The album would ultimately serve as the coda for the Bayley area, culminating in the vocalist being relieved of duty in January 1999. However, following a difficult world tour, the stage was cleared once more for the triumphant return of Bruce Dickinson and Adrian Smith to bail-out the band.

Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

Harris and McBrain backstage, 1998

Although not personally at fault, the quality of the material on the album made it clearer still that Blaze Bayley had been the wrong choice to front IRON MAIDEN. Not only did the band fail in helping him improve on his performance on "The X Factor", IRON MAIDEN as whole exposed its ever increasing limitations even further. Once again recorded at Barnyard Studios, the album came on the heels of a somewhat lacklustre compilation, "Best Of The Beast", which featured a single new track, the somewhat uninspired "Virus". It addressed the vulturous British press and their behaviour around receiving "The X Factor" not particularly well. They publicly wrote off IRON MAIDEN as passé. Unfortunately, "Virtual XI" would only reinforce this impression. Adding further insult to injury, Harris's role as the producer of "Virtual XI" precluded objectivity where it came to sound. Harris clearly pushes his bass too much to the fore at the expense of the guitars and indulging an even murkier sound than on "The X Factor". The result blinded him to song lengths, which muddied what could have been good ideas with more concise editing and less needless repetition. The reasons for his stubbornness were understandable – heavy metal was on the cusp of extinction, IRON MAIDEN was under siege, and Harris saw himself as the last line of defence – but the results on the album had the contrary effect and worked against IRON MAIDEN's favour.

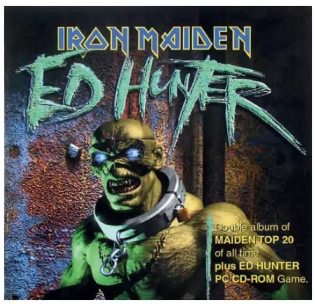
The album's harrowing sound was ominously foreshadowed on the first single "The Angel And The Gambler", an overblown almost ten-minute song featuring endless cut-and-paste repetition, cheap dime store keyboards that drowned out the guitars, and an insufferable lyric which painted Bayley into an uncomfortable corner: "Don't you think I'm a saviour?". Quite possibly the worst song in the band's entire catalogue and sounding almost nothing like IRON MAIDEN, its shortcomings again pointed to larger, overarching problems. Harris's complete lack of editing, awareness, and questionable production values as well as a complete lack of oversight by anyone else severely hurt the band's chemistry. Interestingly, the single edit, which stands at just over six minutes, is far more digestible and even possesses some quirky charm. Regrettably, the full-length album version was played live, not doing the song or the band any justice.

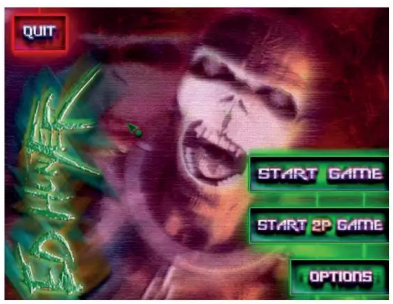
The second single and album opener "Futureal" is a big improvement, a short and snappy pounder just three minutes long prophesying how virtual reality would develop overtime. Some interesting themes are explored, addressing the fine line between the virtual and the real. As the album cover indicates, the virtual contains monsters lurking within it and heeds the potential to supplant reality. Interestingly, manager Rod Smallwood had argued for its release as the album's first single, and the band would have

TRACKLIST

1. Futureal
2. The Angel And The Gambler
3. Lightning Strikes Twice
4. The Clansman
5. When Two Worlds Collide
6. The Educated Fool
7. Don't Look To The Eyes Of A Stranger
8. Como Estais Amigos

SINGLES





Cover and screenshots from the 1999 video game "Ed Hunter"

been far better served by it, but Harris was adamant, and the song unfortunately sank without a trace. While not a bona fide classic, it is among the highlights on this otherwise mediocre album and was kept in the live set for the 1999 "Ed Hunter" reunion tour, with Dickinson's interpretation (available on the "The Wicker Man" single) giving it the extra oomph it deserves. "Lightning Strikes Twice" resembles more of a sketch than a completely finalised song, with what could have been an intriguing chorus with more development undermined by a thin, unpressurised pulp of sound, a far cry from the crunchy wall of sound fans were habituated to. "The Clansman" is the album's resident epic and a highlight that was to find life beyond the "Virtual XI" cycle, being the only song on the album that enters the canon of classic Maiden standards. Based on Mel Gibson's film "Braveheart", William Wallace, and the struggles of the Scottish clans to free themselves from English oppression, the song features a rousing chorus ("Freedom!") that worked extremely well live. Bruce Dickinson's interpretation during 2001's "Rock In Rio" deserves a particular mention here.

Unfortunately, the second half of the album is where things really start to fall apart. "When Two Worlds Collide" is a solid enough composition stemming from Dave Murray about an impending asteroid about to hit earth (it may also have been about Bayley's experiences since joining the band) with a very cool bass-driven mid-section, but the two following tracks are where the listener checks out. "The Educated Fool" could have been a good introspective song from Harris if edited down from its almost seven minutes of repetition ("Time will flow" – but not in a good way). "Don't Look To The Eyes Of A Stranger", ostensibly addressing parents' fears of child abduction, should have been a cousin to "Killers" or "Fear Of The Dark", but repeats its title twenty-three times over the course of an interminable mid-section that fills most of the song's eight minutes, depriving it of any claim to being a progressive epic in line with Harris's usual standards. The album concludes with the solid but mournful "Como Estais Amigos" about the 1982 Falklands war, but unfortunately ends the album with the impression of a mournful state of affairs in general.

Adorned with artwork by Melvyn Grant and released on 23 March 1998, "Virtual XI" was punished by punters in the UK (charting at #16, IRON MAIDEN's worst ever position in the UK charts) and even more so in the US (#124). The promotion wasn't helped by the decision to tie in the album with the FIFA world cup being held that year. The band members appeared in football shirts alongside professional footballers in the album booklet, indicating a band out to pasture and out of touch or, at the very least, an album with a short shelf life. The album was also tied in with the forthcoming "Ed Hunter" video game, another questionable decision, as the game was not made available until the following year and also fell short of expectations. The only good to come out of that release was it did give IRON MAIDEN reunited with Dickinson and Smith the excuse to go back out on tour immediately.

The reasons for Harris's stubbornness may be understandable – heavy metal was on the cusp of extinction, IRON MAIDEN was under siege, and Harris saw himself as the last line of defence – but the results on the album had the contrary effect and worked very much against IRON MAIDEN's favour.

Finally, the "Virtual XI" world tour was probably the most unsuccessful in the band's history. Playing to dwindling audiences and being blown off stage most nights by rejuvenated openers and former Maiden understudy HELLOWEEN. Interesting fact, HELLOWEEN had just released "Better Than Raw", their greatest album since the seminal "Keeper Of The Seven Keys Part II", a fresh, experimental, but pure metal album that stood tall in stark contrast to "Virtual XI". As if that wasn't enough, the band again had to cancel concerts on the North American leg of the tour due to Bayley's voice failing. To top it all off, Bruce Dickinson had reunited with Adrian Smith during this time period and had released two of the finest albums of his career in "Accident Of Birth" (1997) and, most noteworthy, "The Chemical Wedding" (1998), albums that vastly outshone anything Maiden had done since the '80's. The writing was on the wall. Bayley was let go in January 1999 following a secret meeting between Harris and Dickinson arranged by Smallwood, in which the two managed to resolve their differences. Dickinson and Smith returned to IRON MAIDEN, who, in a display of camaraderie, also held on to Janick Gers (and who since his inception had also emerged as one of Maiden's stronger songwriters), now making them a six-piece ensemble.

And just like that, the Bayley era came to a close. To his eternal credit, the singer would go on to revitalise himself with a solo career that has yielded many acclaimed albums, by critics and fans alike. Beset by personal tragedy and no end of obstacles mostly not of his making, he perseveres to this day, winning over fans one by one with his kind and humble personality and his enthusiastic performances. He may not have been the perfect singer for Maiden, but he undoubtedly has Iron in his soul. (gl)

BRUCE DICKINSON: THE SOLO ALBUMS

"TATTOOED MILLIONAIRE"

1990

Conceived from an initial project to contribute a track to "Nightmare On Elm Street 5: The Dream Child", Dickinson's first solo foray was written across just a few weeks in late 1989 as the musical brainchild between him and his old mate ex-WHITE SPIRIT guitarist Janick Gers. Their original collaboration which produced the notable track, "Bring Your Daughter... To The Slaughter", grew into a full album's worth of material.

This was just as well, as Steve Harris asked Dickinson to reserve the aforementioned for IRON MAIDEN, while the rest of the songs gave shape to a more accessible and streamlined hard rock album. Complemented by Andy Carr on bass and Fabio Del Rio (JAGGED EDGE) on drums, two then unknown young musicians, Dickinson picked them on the basis of youth and affability. "Tattooed Millionaire" was produced by star producer Chris Tsangerides and recorded at Battery studios, London. It was released on 8 May 1990, yielding four UK top 40 singles. It is worth noting that this album saw Dickinson employ a more raspier singing style for the first time. Interestingly, this carried over onto IRON MAIDEN's next studio album "No Prayer For The Dying" and marked a decisive break with Dickinson's style of the past.

As the least serious and demanding of Dickinson's albums, "Tattooed Millionaire" nevertheless opens with a song of some musical and lyrical profundity. "Son Of A Gun" would go on to influence Dickinson in subsequent solo albums. The title track "Tattooed Millionaire" is the other strong track on the album, being instantly accessible and memorable not least due to its subject matter, a satirical look at the superficiality, tawdriness, and creative decline of the LA glam metal scene, for which Dickinson had evident distaste. This stemmed not least from the fact that it was being emulated by British rock bands. That didn't stop him from being tawdry and downright smutty himself on this album. However, with the dreadfully catchy "Zulu Lulu" and the borderline tasteless "Dive! Dive! Dive!" (which, again, is not about submarines) oozing barely concealed sexual innuendo. Equally, "Hell On Wheels" an AC/DC-inspired number about, well, receiving fellatio while driving was just as tasteless. The arguably funk metal track "Lickin' The Gun" is a characteristic Dickinsonian critique of American society, and album closer "No Lies" addresses hypocrisy in mainstream society in general. Dickinson's work digs a little deeper into nostalgia with the genteel "Gypsy Road" and the excellent "Born In '58", arguably the most autobiographical track on the album. This track tells the tale of a young Dickinson being raised by his grandfather in the Nottinghamshire town of Worksop and an England of days long gone. The album is rounded out with a competent cover of MOTT THE HOOPLE's "All The Young Dudes".

"Tattooed Millionaire", while the most unremarkable of Dickinson's solo albums, portraits an artist simply enjoying himself and having fun outside the constraints of IRON MAIDEN. It marks the first of many solo adventures in the future and still holds up as a competent attempt to capture the essence of hard rock and solid album composition. *(gl)*

TRACKLIST

1. Son Of A Gun
2. Tattooed Millionaire
3. Born In '58
4. Hell On Wheels
5. Gypsy Road
6. Dive! Dive! Dive!
7. All The Young Dudes
8. Licking The Gun
9. Zulu Lulu
10. No Lies

"BALLS TO PICASSO"

1994

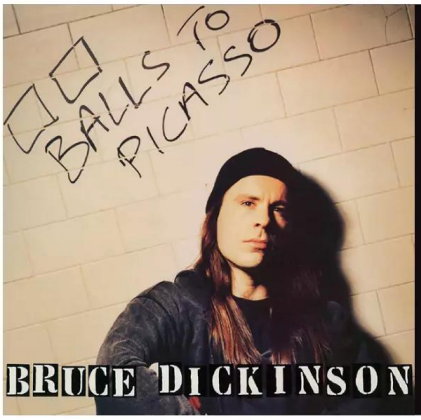
The eclectic but no less intriguing "Balls To Picasso" is the result of no less than three separate attempts to launch Dickinson's solo career after his formal departure from IRON MAIDEN. The first recording sessions were undertaken in 1992 while Dickinson was still part of Maiden. He originally teamed up with Chris Tsangerides and the UK-based SKIN as a backing band.

Dissatisfied however, the singer scrapped these recordings and collaborated with veteran producer Keith Olsen (OZZY OSBOURNE, FLEETWOOD MAC) on what is now referred to as "The Lost Album" (or "The Peter Gabriel" album, giving some indication as to what he was attempting). Subsequently though, these recordings were also scrapped but the results of which returned as B-sides for the singles extracted from "Balls To Picasso". Having by now left IRON MAIDEN, Dickinson struck up a friendship with Olsen's engineer, guitarist Roy Z of TRIBE OF GYPSIES, the latter of which would become his backing band. Roy Z ended up co-writing "Balls To Picasso" and consequently became a long-term collaborator of Dickinson. Produced by Shay Baby, another former assistant to Olsen, and released on 3 June 1994, "Balls To Picasso" could not have been a more definitive statement of Dickinson's desire to creatively move as far out of orbit from IRON MAIDEN's influence as possible. Experimental at times, comprehensive in terms of its mixture of styles, and sometimes downright strange without quite breaking out of the heavy metal straightjacket, "Balls To Picasso" is a moody album, that sees Dickinson trying to find his place in a world with a considerably changed musical landscape. Expectedly, reviews were mixed, with critics either failing to understand what Dickinson was trying to do, or issuing favourable reviews out of nostalgia. History was kind however, as the better parts of the album have held up well, providing a compelling snapshot of Dickinson's frame of mind at that point in time.

If one song is to be remembered from "Balls To Picasso", it would undoubtedly be "Tears Of The Dragon", an intensely personal song and Dickinson's mission statement ("Where I was, I had wings that couldn't fly / Where I was, I had tears I couldn't cry") towards his first step into the great unknown. An exquisite and deeply moving multi-tempoed ballad, it would ironically also be the song on "Balls To Picasso" best suited to IRON MAIDEN. It soars upwards and inwards with yearning wings and still fitts the band's songwriting formula to a point. The lyrics also reflect Dickinson's first serious attempt at writing genuine poetry in song, a talent he would later carry back over into IRON MAIDEN.

Dickinson also delivers a more standard metal track that also wouldn't have been out of place with his former band. "Gods Of War" is a tribal rhythm, driving an impassioned vocal chorus to the angry heavens. Later in the album, Dickinson tries his hand at funk metal in "1000 Points Of Light" and groove with "Laughing In The Hiding Bush" (the title was furnished by his then young son, Austin). The album also features an oddly, quasi-rap with the track "Sacred Cowboys", despite it otherwise being a decent slab of hard rock through its powerful chorus. The album dips with the unremarkable tracks "Fire", the all-out funk but inexplicable "Shoot All The Clowns", and, to some degree, the vaguely Mideast-flavoured "Hell No". The album overall remains memorable though by featuring the SANTANA-like ballad "Change Of Heart", and, not least, the album opener "Cyclops".

A prophetic song about an Orwellian camera eye that would find reality in the panopticon age of the Internet. "Cyclops" remains one of Dickinson's best solo songs, lumbering over the listener like the monster of Homeric myth and culminating in a climax of haunting cries. This is Dickinson at his absolute vocal best! Ultimately this can be said about "Balls To Picasso" as a whole. The variations in style endured throughout the entire album paints an interesting picture of Dickinson's newfound creative freedom and stands the test of time beautifully. *(gl)*



TRACKLIST

1. Cyclops
2. Hell No
3. Gods Of War
4. 1000 Points Of Light
5. Laughing In The Hiding Bush
6. Change Of Heart
7. Shoot All The Clowns
8. Fire
9. Sacred Cowboys
10. Tears Of The Dragon

"SKUNKWORKS"

1996

Incorrectly labelled a 'grunge' album by absent-minded critics and a dwindling fan base, Dickinson's next project was far more of a progressive rock album. Presenting himself in a new style he created "Skunkworks" in the vein of RUSH. Whilst admittedly delivering a congruent sound of the time he did go on to avoid the morose, strippeddown defeatism of grunge.

Characteristically, the name "Skunkworks" stems from Dickinson's love of aviation. It was the name given to the secret Lockheed Martin workshop that built the U-2 and F-117A Stealth Fighter planes. Dickinson had insisted "Skunkworks" be the name of his new band – now comprised of his "Balls To Picasso" touring band (former GUN guitarist Alex Dickson, Chris Dale on bass, and Alessandro Elena on drums) – but his new record label Castle refused to put an album out that didn't have Dickinson's name on the cover. Subsequently, the album received the name instead. Produced by Jack Endino (producer of NIRVANA's debut album "Bleach", hence the grunge allegations) at Great Linford Manor studios and released on 19 February 1996, "Skunkworks" is an adventurous, bold, and pugnacious offering which is more complete and self-contained than "Balls To Picasso". It is veritably the product of a band with its own identity. Unfortunately, almost no one took notice except the vanguard of hardcore Dickinson fans, much to the singer's dismay. But the album, while in hindsight a relative oddity in Dickinson's career, still holds its own decades later, thanks to a refreshing and diversified composition, solid, competent performance, and Dickinson's signature intellectually stimulating subject matters.

While a sonically unified product, "Skunkworks" is an ambient, atmospheric album exploring a range of moods and ruminations. Though not a concept album, the notion of inner and outer space runs throughout, spiced up by personal reflection and sometimes self-laceration from Dickinson. It adequately reflects a mid-life period of contemplating the no-man's land between his peak successes as well as the uncertainty of the life ahead. This is most evident in the deeply personal and even ireful nature of "I Will Not Accept The Truth" which discusses the various labels applied to him. The exenterating track "Faith" talks about a "mutually abusive relationship", and the eviscerating, accusatory "Meltdown", tells the story of people who had turned their backs on him after leaving IRON MAIDEN. These are three of the very best songs on the album, all of which were clearly inspired disappointment and lost camaraderie. Other tracks, though, see Dickinson present himself to be truculent but thoroughly optimistic. Particularly the infectious single "Back From The Edge", the energetic "Headswitch", and the absolutely thrilling "Innerspace", in which Dickinson reflects on that "nothing lasts forever but the certainty of change", enjoin the listener to take a trip with him to "fire up some Beast and ride the skywaves". It is Dickinson's invitation to listener to enjoy music as if riding on the tail of a comet.

Other songs are more contemplative, both musically and lyrically. "Inertia", inspired by the band's visit to war-torn Bosnia, "Dreamstate", and "Octavia", are all staple to that while others are more abstract, pseudo-scientific musings, like "Solar Confinement" and "Inside The Machine". The album as a whole is bookended rather poetically by two of its strongest tracks. The euphoric opener "Space Race" expresses an almost childlike joy in discovery (a most Dickinsonian trait) both lyrically and musically. Inspired by a visit to Hiroshima, the equally as enticing album closer "Strange Death In Paradise" portraits an almost Dali-esque sonic painting of the moment the world dies. It's an ethereal conclusion to an ethereal album which again serves as a testament to Dickinson's frame of mind at the time, part spiteful and part hopeful, but entirely original and, aided by a competent band. The album reflects a Bruce Dickinson now fully divorced from his past, yet suspended somewhere in mid-90's cultural disbelief. *(gl)*

TRACKLIST

1. Space Race
2. Back From The Edge
3. Inertia
4. Faith
5. Solar Confinement
6. Dreamstate
7. I Will Not Accept The Truth
8. Inside The Machine
9. Headswitch
10. Meltdown
11. Octavia
12. Innerspace
13. Strange Death In Paradise

"ACCIDENT OF BIRTH"

1997

"Accident Of Birth" was the first in what may be considered a trilogy of heavy metal masterpieces. Dickinson saw himself hell bent on a triad of objectives, namely proving himself to the metal community, proving to the rest of the world that heavy metal was far from dead, and proving that he could even stand above IRON MAIDEN.

As time would tell, he far succeeded on all three accounts. "Accident Of Birth" saw a course correction from the experimental nature of the previous outings. T his was no doubt also inspired by a desire to reinvigorate sales and fan appeal. Luckily, Dickinson had several aces up his sleeve, not least the return Adrian Smith to his circle. This move marks a milestone in IRON MAIDEN's history, one that is often overlooked by fans and far mor significant than one might assume as it was testament to the internal troubles brewing within the band. Back at team Dickinson, the partnership with Roy Z was also rekindled. It was his influence that became the catalyst for this album's success. He originally played the riff for the song "Accident Of Birth" to a then depressed Dickinson through the phone. Struggling with intense self-doubt, Dickinson was on the plane to LA the very next day. In the next weeks they co-wrote most of the album together. Roy Z also produced the album, bringing a crushing, contemporary sound to recordings moulded in classic heavy metal. The successful partnership made "Accident Of Birth" sound contemporary, relevant, and, most importantly, authentic.

Recording took place at Silver Cloud Recording and Sound City Studios, LA with together with Adrien Smith, Roy Z on second guitar, the TRIBE OF GYPSIES' Eddie Casillas on bass and Dave Ingraham on drums. The album saw its release on 14 May 1997 and delivered an intense experience from its opening seconds. "Freak" announces Dickinson's return to heavy metal with immediate ferocity. Dickinson's soaring vocals now more reminiscent of his cleaner '80's voice but with depth accumulated by age. This style is immediately continued after the brief psychedelic interlude "Toltec 7 Arrival" with "Starchildren". A crushing ballad of vicious, molten metal invading the mind like the alien invasion it portrays. The sound continues to become even more refined with "Taking The Queen", a brooding half-ballad seeped in fantasy and swirling inflections about a dying queen whose kingdom will perish with her. It is a track of breath-taking beauty both musically and lyrically. With "Darkside Of Aquarius" Dickinson's further cements his return to the fold once and for all. The force and emotion with which Dickinson expressed his art certainly gave Steve Harris more than a little reason to worry. Not for the least that the song quite literally conveyed more of IRON MAIDEN's legacy than IRON MAIDEN did for almost a decade.

"Road To Hell" presents more of a straightforward by-the-numbers metal track which "anticipates what went through Jesus's head whilst being crucified". The gothic "Man Of Sorrows" is a sublime piano-based orchestral ballad showcasing Dickinson's flair for the dramatic and his ongoing obsession with occultist Aleister Crowley. "The Magician", also based on Crowley, is considerably more tongue in cheek. The title track from which the album was born is another exemplary slab of heavy metal, but was also darkly autobiographical. According to his biography, Dickinson was told by his mother that he was "a failed abortion" because his parents had been too young when he was conceived – a providential twist of fate, to be sure. Following the swampy "Welcome To The Pit", about "dirty, dark and wicked sex", the album concludes with the brooding, accusatory "Omega" and the semi-acoustic, wistful "Arc of Space". "Accident Of Birth", adorned by crazed jack-in-the-box jester puppet "Edison" drawn by Derek Riggs, initially outsold "Skunkworks" two to one upon release. However, Dickinson, Smith, and the TRIBE OF GYPSIES were still confined to playing clubs. Dickinson published a near-perfect heavy metal album that vastly outperformed his former band lighting the fuse for many greater achievements to come. From that point forward he was anticipating nothing but perfection. *(gl)*

TRACKLIST

1. Freak
2. Toltec 4 Arrival
3. Starchildren
4. Taking The Queen
5. Darkside Of Aquarius
6. Road To Hell
7. Man Of Sorrows
8. Accident Of Birth
9. The Magician
10. Welcome To The Pit
11. Omega
12. Arc Of Space

"THE CHEMICAL WEDDING"

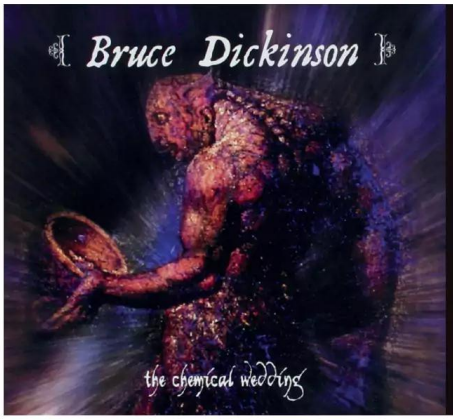
1998

It is hard to overstate the sheer achievement that is "The Chemical Wedding". A veritable Gesamtkunstwerk grounded in the mystical poetry of William Blake and the myths and occult science of alchemy. Written and recorded between January and June 1998 at Sound City and Silver Cloud studios, LA with the same line-up as "Accident Of Birth" and again produced by Roy Z, the album is a visionary masterpiece inspired by pure heavy metal and Bruce Dickinson's own canon.

One would imagine the immense pressure put on an artist publishing a magnum opus such as "Accident Of Birth", but Bruce Dickinson carried his now critically acclaimed solo talent forward and produced "The Chemical Wedding", an even more confident album than its predecessor, expertly crafted into a unified musical whole with several conceptual threads flowing throughout. The narrative of this album neither retells the poetry of Blake or recounts the history of alchemy to the letter. Instead, the two themes are woven into each other to create something unique. We are thus left with an intellectual journey in which musical and lyrical concepts are used like alchemy and we witness a sound stage that opens windows to the soul, guided by the strange and sometimes prophetic visions reminiscent of Blake's poetry and paintings.

A sombre opener for a sombre album, "King In Crimson" sets the tone for the journey to come with a gritty, throbbing riff and menacing harmonies portending the uncomfortable themes to come. The failure of both the literal form of alchemy and its metaphor carries straight into the towering, crushing title track "Chemical Wedding", which features some of Dickinson's most stirring lyrics, veritable poetry to match that of Blake's. The journey continues with "The Tower", featuring a driving bass line and descending guitars creating a distinctly medieval feel. By injecting a dose of mysticism, the ultra-heavy "Killing Floor" is one of only two songs that aren't part of the alchemy/Blake concept, but nevertheless match the album's tone to perfection. Closing out the first half of the album is an absolute behemoth of a track, a heavy metal chef d'oeuvre that is the very definition of 'epic', "Book Of Thel". This tune is based on Blake's poem of the same name but inverts the original poem, transforming the virgin Thel into a monstrous sorceress that draws her powers from her serpentine seduction. Throughout the track, we find her venomous source of genuine terror conjured up in the music ...

"Gates Of Urizen", with its gently strummed guitar building a gloomy dynamic, holds the key to the album's central theme, the struggle for creativity. Urizen and Los are two antagonistic figures in Blake's mythology, wherein Los embodies creativity and Urizen stands for the art industry. Both forces fight for the heart and soul of the artist. The beautiful, Celtic "Jerusalem" is based on the traditional 1916 hymn by Hubert Parry, who adapted the verses in the introduction to Blake's "Milton: A Poem". Dickinson adapted it to his own liking, rewriting the lyrics according to what he sees as the true character of "Jerusalem", namely rejecting patriotism in favour of mysticism. The mandolin-featured track also features Dickinson's hero, shock rock pioneer ARTHUR BROWN reading a passage from Blake in the outro. "Trumpets Of Jericho" talks of failure, while the heavier-than-thou "Machine Men" addresses disappointment hinting at the broken relationship to his former band ("Machine Men, Cannibals of Rust / Machine Men, Iron bites the dust"). Finally, his magnum opus concludes with the sublime "The Alchemist", a song about Blake himself. Released on 15 September 1998 and critically hailed as the masterpiece it is, "The Chemical Wedding" features Blake's painting "The Ghost Of A Flea" as its cover artwork and would become the defining statement of Bruce Dickinson the artist – it is the greatest album IRON MAIDEN never made. By January 1999, Dickinson was once again ensconced as IRON MAIDEN's singer, but now having achieved once and for all what he set out to do when he left the band in 1993. (gl)



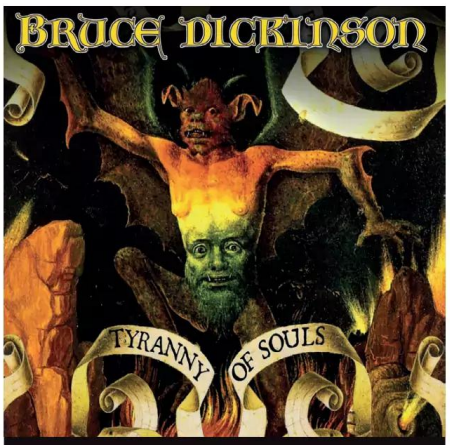
TRACKLIST

1. King In Crimson
2. Chemical Wedding
3. The Tower
4. Killing Floor
5. Book Of Thel
6. Gates Of Urizen
7. Jerusalem
8. Trumpets Of Jericho
9. Machine Men
10. The Alchemist

"TYRANNY OF SOULS"

2005

Completing Dickinson's solo triptych of near-flawless heavy metal albums, "Tyranny Of Souls" was conceived with IRON MAIDEN's star now very much back on the ascendant, but with unfulfilled creativity lurking in the depths of the singer's soul. The idea for the project was initially born from an appearance by Dickinson on ROB HALFORD's comeback solo album "Resurrection".



TRACKLIST

1. Mars Within (Intro)
2. Abduction
3. Soul Intruders
4. Kill Devil Hill
5. Navigate The Seas Of The Sun
6. River Of No Return
7. Power Of The Sun
8. Devil On A Hog
9. Believil
10. Tyranny Of Souls

Produced by Roy Z, Dickinson and Halford performed the track "The One You Love To Hate" together, live at the London Astoria with Geoff Tate of QUEENSRŸCHE. The project led to an idea whereby the three would record an entire album together envisioned as "The Three Tremors", and for which Dickinson began composing the track "Tyranny Of Souls". It foresaw specific parts for each vocalist. Interestingly, Dickinson wanted Ronnie James Dio as part of the trio over Tate. Ultimately, the project didn't materialize but Dickinson pressed ahead with the work already done. The album as a whole was conceived in 2004, with Roy Z sending Dickinson riffs while he was on the road with IRON MAIDEN. Dickinson subsequently added melodies and lyrics. Recorded started in early 2005 at Castle Oaks, Calabasas and Signature Sound studios, San Diego and was once again produced by Roy Z. Unlike the previous two albums, Adrian Smith was not featured this time and Roy Z handled all guitar duties. It was further complemented by many other musicians connected to his wealth of projects.

Opening with an enigmatic call to 'Professor Quatermass' on eerie intro "Mars Within", the album launches straight into the infectious, gallivanting metal of "Abduction", where it becomes immediately clear that Dickinson again means serious business. "Soul Intruders", fells at first as if driven by demons. Heavy double bass drums open the track before it settles on a more conventional melodic perch. It is immediately followed up by "Kill Devil Hill". Dickinson, a keen aviator pays tribute to the Wright Brothers and the site in North Carolina where they successfully launched the first controlled powered airplane flights in 1903. This trilogy of molten metal tracks yields to two of the most moving and thought-provoking songs in Dickinson's repertoire, the folksy, progressive "Navigate The Seas Of The Sun" and the ethereal and menacing "River Of No Return". The former, a ballad, is supposedly based on Erich von Däniken's theory of extra-terrestrial presence on earth predating humanity. Lyrically, it also pays a pensive tribute to outer space ("flowers in the garden of the Gods"). The pulsating, looming "River Of No Return" is an uneasy philosophical rumination with – simply, sublime – lyrics about individual and collective choices. The River Styx is used as a metaphor to musically explore the concept of space. An immediate contrast is made with "Power Of The Sun", the most Maiden-esque track on the album. It features a distinctive opening and quasi-speed metal drive. Instead of addressing an interstellar theme, the song addresses a frenzied human activity on earth which is determined by solar cycles. We find references to the primeval 'worship of the sun' as well as the worship of vassalage for its own sake. "Devil On A Hog" remains the only track on the album which feels out of place. It is feels reminiscent of "Tattooed Millionaire" albeit being tons of fun. "Believil" is demonic psychedelia heavier than a ton of bricks, clearing the path to the album's crowning glory, its title track:

"Tyranny Of Souls" is inspired lyrically by Shakespeare's "Macbeth", but represents a historic account of the immaculate "The Chemical Wedding" album. It pays homage to Dickinson's work and journey wrapped up in a musical representation of Blake's painting "The Circle Of The Lustful". Released on 23 May 2005 and featuring "The Mouth Of Leviathan" (Panel of the Polyptych of Vanity) by Renaissance artist Hans Memling on the album cover, "Tyranny Of Souls" is Dickinson's final solo album to date – though it is well-known that he had been working on another as late as 2015. We remain excited for it to arrive! *(gl)*

"BRAVE NEW WORLD"

2000

Following the debacle of the Bayley era, Steve Harris and his comrades-in-arms straightened up, had a cold shower, and brought back not only the peerless Bruce Dickinson, but also the inimitable Adrian Smith for the recording of their twelfth studio album "Brave New World". This album would usher in the new millennium and the band's third act. Critics and fans alike were eager to find out whether IRON MAIDEN could make its triumphant return to the days of former glory after the cruel interruption they had to endure throughout the 1990's.

Adrian Smith

Photo: John McMurtrie

Metal fans across the world rejoiced upon the official return of the two prodigal sons on 10 February 1999. After a decade of mediocrity and middling albums, the world of heavy metal was filled with burning anticipation for the next chapter of IRON MAIDEN. In the wake of the "Ed Hunter" tour in spring 1999, the band began writing new material that was to herald in their triumphant return. Embracing the momentum gained from their acclaimed "Ed Hunter" tour, Maiden spent the autumn of 1999 at Guillaume Tell Studios, Paris located just behind the famous Champs Élysées. Under the supervision of new producer Kevin Shirley the band started recording. "The Nomad", "The Mercenary" or the epic "Dream Of Mirrors", were already composed in 1998 and were originally intended for a third album with Blaze Bayley. We thus find some stylistic influences from the band's "Virtual XI" phase, but, by and large, "Brave New World" would signal a new beginning for the band on all accounts.

With the return of Dickinson and Smith, IRON MAIDEN managed to score an incredible media coup, reversing the public perception of the band and launching a new era, invigorating the fans, appeasing the critics and storming the billboards. Dickinson ably

TRACKLIST

1. The Wicker Man
2. Ghost Of The Navigator
3. Brave New World
4. Blood Brothers
5. The Mercenary
6. Dream Of Mirrors
7. The Fallen Angel
8. The Nomad
9. Out Of The Silent Planet
10. The Thin Line Between Love And Hate

SINGLES

restored the classic IRON MAIDEN sound immediately with his undiminished, soaring vocals. At the same time, Smith's talent helped finetune the songwriting with his elegant flourishes. The two had just completed album-tour cycles together for two of their albums, some which stand as the finest heavy metal albums of the decade (if not all time) in their own right. Most notable Bruce Dickinson's "The Chemical Wedding" and "Accident Of Birth" stand out as exceptional pieces of art. The duo wasted no time infusing their creativity and enthusiasm straight back into IRON MAIDEN. Additionally, with Kevin "The Caveman" Shirley (DREAM THEATER, RUSH, JOURNEY, among others) at the production helm sharing duties with Steve Harris, nothing stood in the way for the return of IRON MAIDEN. As a result, "Brave New World" finally brought back the unmistakable sound that fans knew and loved. Shirley convinced the band to mostly record live. The resulting new and innovative recording style led to a more collaborative songwriting process than the one the band was used to since "Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son".

Roaring out of the gate and driven by a riff from the Smith armoury of songwriting flair, the first single "The Wicker Man" combines all the classic IRON MAIDEN hallmarks in a playing time of less than five minutes. Inspired by Robin Hardy's 1973 cult folk horror film starring Christopher Lee, the song is actually something of a rewrite. Dickinson actually composed another song entitled "The Wicker Man" when writing for "Accident Of Birth", however it only little resembles the Maiden version. While the title refers to the film, Dickinson is referring to both the selfishness and desensitisation inherent in modern society. The "ferryman" resembles Charon, the figure in Greek mythology who would ferry souls from the land of the living to that of the dead, and the "Wicker Man" symbolises the return to the pagan ways. The songs suggests that the listener embarks on a quest to find the energy which is drawn from being immersed in something larger than oneself, such as being part of a crowd at a rock concert: " ...You felt in some ways that you could change something, you could change the world a weeny bit that day 'cos you're all in that field. And that's what the song's about, hence the chorus, 'Your time will come'. You suddenly feel you are a part of everything," Dickinson told journalist Essi Berelian.

Ensuring that the listener understands that the opening salvo was no fluke, the

"The Thin Line Between Love And Hate", with its unusual harmony between verses and chorus, features one of the most impassioned performances of Dickinson's entire career. A soaring and life-affirming vocal performance that firmly places him in the same territory as Freddie Mercury as one of the greatest vocalists of all time.

following track, the Ulyssean "Ghost Of The Navigator", firmly reinforces the perception that IRON MAIDEN had returned to its former self. The song delivers slabs of pure heavy metal across numerous tempo changes, with the true power of now three guitarists. Janick Gers's extra layer of harmony makes itself particularly felt, and a forceful mid-section from Harris that not only sounded familiar, but also transcended that pure heavy metal that was missing throughout the '90's.

" ... [It] struck me as a metaphor for life," Dickinson explained. "... it was a great big epic sea-faring journey and the journey was life and the navigator was us as we were writing it." Echoing the narrative of Homer's "Odyssey", the navigator is "[t]rying not to be distracted by all the ghosts of his failed aspirations, and also his own fears, that it may all be pointless when he gets there, and he does it, because he must." The track – one of several epics on the album – however, is also very experimental and progressive in its composition, indicating the approach the band would take to songwriting in years to come.

Title track "Brave New World" was inspired by Dickinson's re-reading of the classic dystopian novel by Aldous Huxley, and sees the singer deliver one of his most emotionally satisfying performances and contains some of his finest lyrics. "Brave New World" was the perfect song with which to foreshadow the early 21st century. Dickinson regarded it as a meditation on the tragedy and sadness of what the "Brave New World" has done: "[I]t's Huxley's premonition of virtual reality, and I'm taking that and throwing it out there for discussion," he told C. Bottomley of VH1. The timeless line: "Dying swans / Twisted Wings / Beauty Not Needed Here" came from his heart-breaking observations of the time, only to be reaffirmed times over until this day. "I remember reading about the extinction of these beautiful cranes in Japan, where the crane's like a national symbol, and nobody cared," Dickinson continued. "And they asked, 'Do you care about all these cranes dying because of pollution?' And they went, 'Well, we have pictures of them in the museums, we don't care whether they really exist – just as long as the pictures of them exist in some way. This is fuckin' 'Brave New World'."

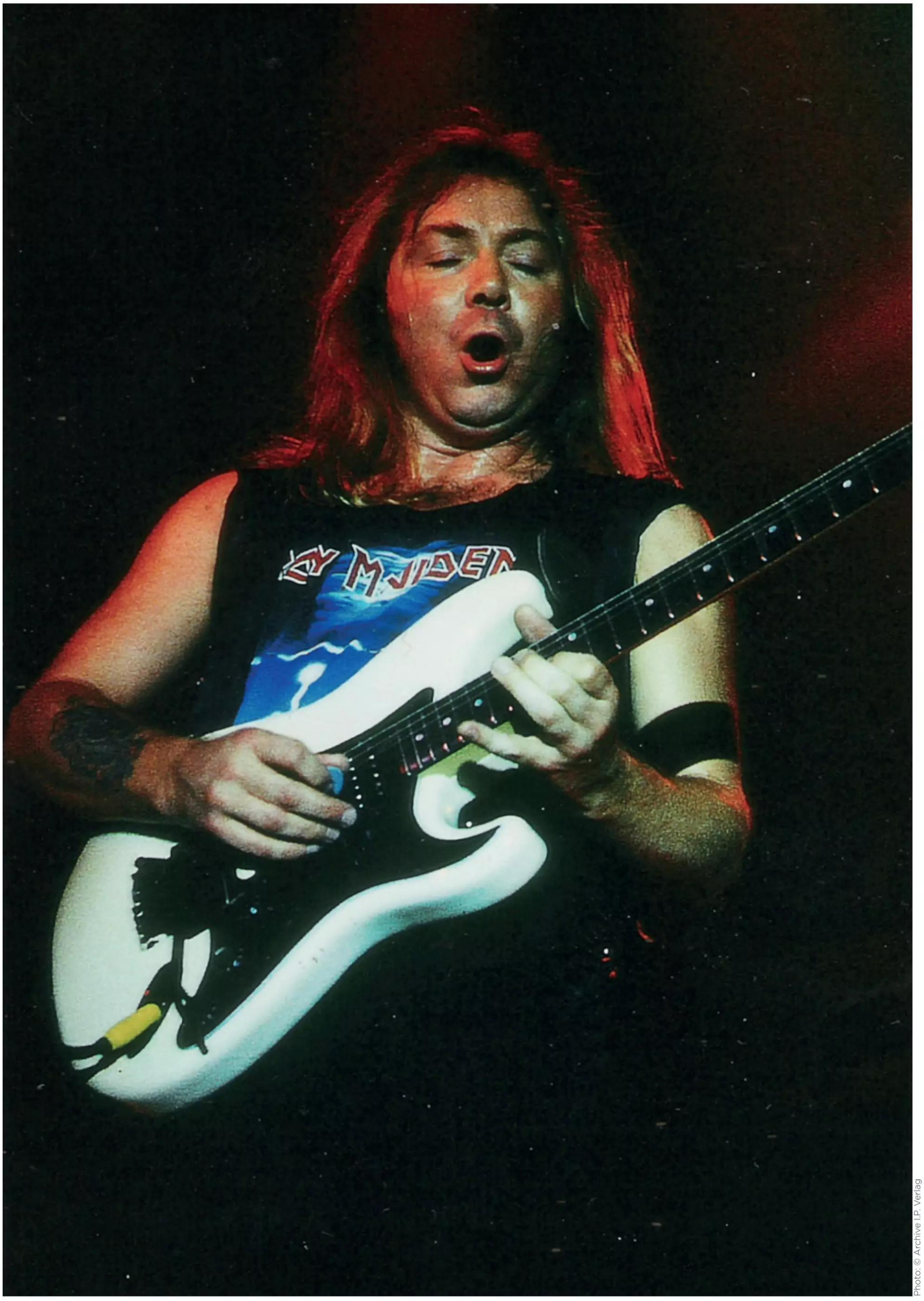
The album's opening triad of now Maiden classics is followed by a fourth. The tender, waltz-like, quasi-orchestral "Blood Brothers", a song written by Harris as an homage to his father that also reflects the newfound camaraderie in the band. For no lesser reason does it now enjoy prominence in the band's regular live set. With its power to make even grown men weep, fans have adopted the track as the anthem that unites the Maiden and the broader heavy metal family. It is also found as a classic that helps pay tribute to victims of various tragic events.

Following the rampaging but rather straightforward "The Mercenary", the album dips somewhat across the next three tracks. Editing shortcomings that had marked the previous album become apparent on "Dream Of Mirrors", "The Fallen Angel", and "The Nomad". Critics agree that all of them could have benefited from some additional tweaking. That notwithstanding, "The Fallen Angel" does possess some great riffs and a gargantuan chorus. Similarly, "Dream Of Mirrors" comes into its own with a galloping barrage and double chorus in its second half after a subdued but inviting introductory setup. "The Nomad" deftly manages the atmospherics thus sending the listener on a journey. "To Tame A Land" continues that journey, summoning up imagery of vast, harsh deserts with its sprawling, halting rhythm and epic sense of barren wanderlust.

As with many albums, IRON MAIDEN saves the best for last with the second single "Out Of The Silent Planet" and "The Thin Line Between Love And Hate". The former, a crushing track with environmental overtones based on the 1956 science fiction film "Forbidden Planet" which was based on the 1938 C.S. Lewis science fiction novel of the same name. It contains a simple but memorable sing-along chorus but is best remembered for its pulverising verses. With his remarkable vocals, Dickinson conjures up the sheer apocalypse reflected in the lyrics.

However, the album doesn't reach its ultimate peak until the closer. "The Thin Line Between Love And Hate", with its unusual harmony between verses and chorus, features one of the most impassioned performances of Dickinson's entire career. A soaring and life-affirming vocal performance that firmly places him in the same territory as Freddie Mercury as one of the greatest vocalists of all time.

Released on 29 May 2000, the immediate success of the album affirmed that IRON MAIDEN was finally back on the right track. "Brave New World" charted at #7 in the UK, #3 in Germany and Italy, and #1 in Sweden. Amid strong performances elsewhere, it received mostly rave reviews in the press, with the exception of maybe a couple of snobbish hipster comments in mainstream music publications like NME. Following the tour for "Virtual XI", which had reduced the band to playing theatres and clubs, Maiden were back to playing arenas and headlining festivals. The tour kicked off in June 2000 and took the band across the globe, helping to revive their reputation in the US and culminating in a legendary show that saw them headlining Rock in Rio in front of over 250,000 people (also the final show of the tour!). That show was later released as the double live set "Rock In Rio" and arguably stands alongside "Live After Death" as IRON MAIDEN's most impressive live document. While the rehabilitation and return to mega-stardom of later years was not yet complete, it was certainly underway. "Brave New World" had succeeded where its predecessors had failed, raising the expectations of fans for the band's bright future. *(gl/dh)*



Murray live, 1998

Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

"DANCE OF DEATH"

2003

On the quest for a worthy follow-up to "Brave New World", IRON MAIDEN re-entered the studio in January of 2003 with producer Kevin Shirley to record "Dance of Death". The recording process took less than a month, with the album mixed by April and scheduled to hit the shelves in September 2003. The release would follow the band's "Give Me Ed 'Til I'm Dead" summer festival headlining tour, which included the iconic Download Festival at Donington. The result would be one of the band's most eclectic albums yet and would indisputably contain a number of songs that to this day represent some of IRON MAIDEN's highest standard. "Dance Of Death" would be another milestone in the band's rise back to the top.

Recorded in analogue at SARM West Studios, London, the album would include a number of "firsts" for Maiden. It features the band's first fully acoustic track and the first composition to be submitted by Nicko McBrain, after 20 years with the band. By no means a concept album, the notions of death and finitude do, however, run throughout the album, and are addressed through different types of soundscapes and songwriting styles. The album opener "Wildest Dreams" is a fairly upbeat, simple number, written in a major key, an absolute rarity for IRON MAIDEN. The '70's, UFO-type vibe supplemented by uncharacteristically bluesy riffing and some great soloing from composer Adrian Smith round off the track. It was premiered on the "Give Me 'Ed 'Til I'm Dead" festival tour and met favourable response from the audience, leading the band to release it as the first single from the album.

A far stronger single, however, was the follow-up track "Rainmaker", largely written by Dave Murray. Fans received it as a welcome return to classic Maiden featuring twin harmony leads. The buoyant rocker being both raw and emotional, lyrically following the search for happiness, using rain as a metaphor. "I remember Bruce saying in the rehearsal studio one day that the intro riffs inspired him to think of raindrops and that's where the rainmaker concept sprung from. In fact you could almost see the light bulb going on in his head as he thought about it – it was very inspiring," Murray explained. Next up is "No More Lies", an atmospheric song from Harris reminiscent of the Bayley years. In structure, it follows a mellow but anticipatory beginning, a hard rocking middle with an up-tempo, full-blast version of the chords from the introduction, and a wistful ending. It later also released as the lead track on the "Dance Of Death Souvenir EP". The highlight of the song is the three consecutive solos from Murray, Smith, and Gers, demonstrating the full potency of the 'triple-axe attack'. "'No More Lies' has a lot to do with [the Leonardo Da Vinci painting] The Last Supper," Harris clarified. "But it's also as if Jesus was going to make a comeback tomorrow, and what that might mean for him as an individual."

The sublime "Montségur", with music written by Gers and further arranged by Harris, is the first epic tour-de-force on the album and inscribes itself immediately into the canon of IRON MAIDEN classics. Dickinson's lyrics were inspired by a visit to the Cathar stronghold, a monastery castle atop a 3,000-foot mountain of the same name in the Languedoc region in southern France that fell following a two-month siege by Crusading forces during the Albigensian Crusade of 1244. "The way I look at it is if that you're going to plunder something for the lyrical basis of a song then at least plunder something that has really happened rather than invest in some crass, sword and dorkery epic, y'know?" Dickinson mused.

At almost nine minutes long, title track "Dance Of Death" is the second epic of the album. Composed by Gers and Harris, the original inspiration came from Ingmar Bergman's 1957 film "The Seventh Seal". Harris ran with the original vision lyrically but transformed it into a tale of voodoo in the Everglades in America's deep south. Keen listeners will recognize a nod to Edgar Alan Poe's "Masque of Red Death", a vision of life as a crazed masquerade with the masked disguising lost personalities. In the song, Dickinson's narrator participates in a macabre ceremony in which he falls into a trance, "walks on coals" and witnesses his own soul escaping his body. Snapping out of it, he flees the ritual and resolves that the only 'dance' he will ever engage with again is with Death. Musically, the song is something of a stylistic departure for IRON MAIDEN, verging on what might be termed "folk metal". It starts off softly and uneasily before building up with a crescendo into an explosion of up-tempo Celtic ballet. Dickinson used the opportunity during live performances to don masks and a cowl in a tribute to his hero PETER GABRIEL.

Closing out the first half of the album is "Gates Of Tomorrow", a song which appears to reference the internet and apprehension

TRACKLIST

1. Wildest Dreams
2. Rainmaker
3. No More Lies
4. Montségur
5. Dance Of Death
6. Gates Of Tomorrow
7. New Frontier
8. Paschendale
9. Face In The Sand
10. Age Of Innocence
11. Journeyman

SINGLES

Death On The Road: Westfalenhalle Arena, Dortmund, 24 November 2003

about what it will mean when conscience and moral choices become impossible without its all-pervasive influence and behavioural determination. "New Frontier", the first ever contribution from McBrain, who composed the basic song and the bass line, addresses the born-again Christian's drummer's concerns with cloning. A valiant musical effort for a first composition. Both this and the preceding track are nevertheless rather unmemorable by comparison to the first five tracks.

The third album epic "Paschendale" is without a doubt the greatest song of "Dance Of Death" and an entry into the pantheon of IRON MAIDEN's greatest masterpieces, probably rivalling "Rime Of The Ancient Mariner" in emotion, scope, and grandiosity. The track represented another first for Maiden. It was composed primarily by Smith and Harris thus gaining a competitor on his hitherto exclusive domain of writing Maiden epics. "Paschendale" is about the third battle of Ypres in Flanders, Belgium which took place in 1917 during WWI, where the Allied objective was to take the village of Passchendaele. Over 600,000 men would lose their lives over the course of three and a half months for the sake of advancing a few miles behind enemy lines. The offensive became a symbol of the pointless loss of life and the terrors and tragedy of ideology and war (each side ultimately retreated to its original position) and the inspiration for this track.

Musically, the song couldn't have been constructed more finely. Opening with McBrain's rhythm on the hi-hat intoning Morse code, the accompanying, foreboding guitar lick leads into a driving march evoking the halting and futile advance. Driven by a soaring chorus invoking the thoughts every young man in the trenches must have experienced, the song alternates between periods of melodic calm and heavy intensity, suggesting quiet moments in between heavy shelling, before culminating in a piledriving solo section. The arrangement explodes into a final chorus accompanied by orchestral section, musically underscoring the tragedy of the minimisation of life by the 'rational' forces of technological progress. Live, Dickinson would introduce the song dressed in an infantryman trench uniform with a passage from war poet Wilfred Owen's "Anthem For Doomed Youth". IRON MAIDEN's greatest (anti) war song of all, "Paschendale" is a magisterial composition and one of the greatest songs in the Maiden canon.

Following that, "Face In The Sand" feels a little underwhelming, but is nevertheless still a fine song featuring McBrain using a double bass drum pedal for the first and only time in his career. The track evokes the sands of time and lyrically addresses the second Iraq war that was taking place at the time, and the propaganda surrounding it. "Age Of Innocence" is a middling Murray number with a rather infectious chorus nevertheless. The album concludes with "Journeyman", yet another first in that it was IRON MAIDEN's

first ever all-acoustic song, a gorgeous ballad, featuring a hopeful and uplifting chorus lauding passion and determination. Rather than it being about a journeyman in the sense of having a learned trade, the song is about following one's heart. "Lyrically I had images of somebody making decisions with his heart regardless of where it was going to lead him in life," Dickinson explained. "You can choose to sit in your cubby hole and choose to rot away slowly or you can choose to go and do something mad and glorious – it's all up to you."

An otherwise (almost) excellent album overall, "Dance Of Death" was marred by a couple of production errors. The first was a somewhat botched album cover. Dave Patchett, the illustrator of the extraordinary CATHEDRAL album covers, had originally come up with the idea of Eddie as Death surrounded by hooded monks, but Rod Smallwood found the foreground to be too empty, and allegedly hired someone from www.ironmaiden.com to design some CGI figures around the original artwork, which Patchett was then supposed to refine. But the band then decided to go ahead and use the new version as it was. Patchett was mortified and asked not to be credited for the cover. The second error had to do with the slightly murky production on the finished product: Kevin Shirley had given a compressed version of the mix to Harris as a test run, who listened to it in his car and found it to his liking that the mix sounded a bit off. Harris then told Shirley this was the version he wanted him to master. A clearer mix, though, would have benefited the album more.

All things considered, "Dance Of Death" was a commercial and critical success. Released on 8 September 2003, it went to #2 in the UK, Germany, and Greece, #1 in Finland, and even #18 on the US Billboard 200, as well as charting highly almost everywhere and garnering mostly excellent reviews, thus further cementing the band's rise back to the top. The ensuing tour in support of the album, however, was relatively short by Maiden's standards. It lasted from late October 2003 to early February 2004 and toured mostly European territories, deliberately targeting theatres and indoor venues to reflect the intimate atmosphere of the album. The tour resulted in another live album and DVD, "Death On The Road", recorded at the Westfallenhalle in Dortmund, Germany, on 24 November 2003. It was subsequently released in August 2005. IRON MAIDEN would also embark on the "Eddie Rips Up The World" tour in the summer of 2005 in support of their biographical DVD "The Early Days" that was released earlier the same year. It featured songs from only the first four albums. The North American leg of that tour saw IRON MAIDEN co-headlining Ozzfest with BLACK SABBATH, which would give rise to an incident that would go down in infamy and which would inspire an unforgettable song on their next album ... (gl)

"A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH"

2006

Third time's the charm. With their previous two offerings going from strength to strength, IRON MAIDEN delivered one of the greatest albums of their career with "A Matter Of Life And Death". The band was once again reborn, and as unstoppable as ever. In an unprecedented and bold move, they played the entirety of their ambitious new album live putting themselves back on the throne and lifting themselves above all other contemporary acts. For a band almost 30 years into their career, and despite nothing left to prove, they returned showing the world once again what impact their music and performance can make.

2005 brought about an incredible turn of events. IRON MAIDEN was on the road for their "Eddie Rips Up The World" world tour making a stop at the legendary Ozzfest where they coheadlined with BLACK SABBATH. Then-popular support bands such as SUM 41 and DEFTONES took to the stage proudly wearing Maiden apparel. The result, parents started bringing their kids to Maiden shows, and the band won over new an entirely new generation of audience every night for the remainder of the tour. IRON MAIDEN had already firmly re-established itself in most places of the world, with no end in sight to their popularity. Only the US remained as the last territory to conquer, the one place that had turned its back on the band for almost 20 years. But all that changed at Ozzfest 2005.

On the last night of the Ozzfest tour in San Bernadino, California, on 20 August 2005 matters came to a head. That night, IRON MAIDEN were pelted with eggs, bottles and ice from one specific area of the V.I.P. pit and their P.A. was turned off at key moments during songs, among many other provocations. Dickinson, in his usual fashion, largely kept his cool – "these colours do not fucking run from you asswipes" – but it was obvious what was happening: the band were being sabotaged, on Sharon Osbourne's orders. Following Maiden's set, she emerged on stage to berate Dickinson, who had disparaged reality shows like the infamous "The Osbournes" during his performance. But the audience did not take kindly to her intervention. She was eventually drowned out by booing and chants of "Maiden, Maiden!", and the moment was symbolic. What we witnessed was a transfer of power in the world of heavy metal, and IRON MAIDEN were reclaiming their crown as the true defenders of the faith. Sure enough, from that point onwards, Maiden became the only metal band capable of drawing crowds the same size as METALLICA.

After the events of that fateful evening, there was an album to produce to keep that momentum going. Although the end result would be a crowning jewel in the band's discography, it was immediately clear what direction the band would take after the experimental "Dance Of Death" album. From the album's overall musical direction to the overarching subject matters of war, religion and life's difficulties, the album takes great inspiration from the masterpiece "Paschendale". It does that to such a degree that one might conclude it represents a full-length album version of it. Writing started near the end of 2005 and the album was completed in early 2006. The band occupied SARM West Studios, London with Kevin Shirley from 1 March 2006 and finished recording on 4 May 2006. Recordings were mostly done live, with songs mastered individually as they were finished. Controversially, the album overall, was not mastered. Based on the strength of the original recordings, the band's primary songwriter Steve Harris decided against it and wanting the album sound as live as possible.

The album opener (and second single) "Different World" follows the Maiden tradition in being short, up-tempo and delivering a carpe diem-type message. Smith originally wrote it in a 7/4-time signature, but Harris heard the potential for a single and rearranged it into a more straightforward 4/4 time, which didn't prevent Smith from layering it with a magnificent solo. Probably a lesser-known fact, the band tributed the track as an homage to THIN LIZZY.

As a nod to the San Bernadino incident, the album gets proper serious with the glorious track "These Colours Don't Run". We are blessed with a story about a soldier about to ship off to war sharing also the perspectives and sentiments of those left behind. According to Dickinson, "certain areas of morality are not negotiable. [Soldiers] are heroes ... because their loyalty to their band of brothers [is] not negotiable." The epic, brutal "Brighter Than A Thousand Suns" is indisputably the album's highlight. Its pummelling central riff effortlessly summons imagery of bomb shelters, nuclear-armed bombers 'launched with no recall', and impending apocalypse in the face of a nuclear fallout. The track pays tribute to the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer, developer of the first nuclear weapons and father of the

TRACKLIST

1. Different World
2. These Colours Don't Run
3. Brighter Than A Thousand Suns
4. The Pilgrim
5. The Longest Day
6. Out Of The Shadows
7. The Reincarnation Of Benjamin Breeg
8. For The Greater Good Of God
9. Lord Of Light
10. The Legacy

SINGLES

Manhattan Project, as well as the destruction of the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki by uranium and plutonium bombs on 6 and 9 August 1945.

A simpler, more straightforward track, "The Pilgrim" is the product of two different songs Gers had brought in, which Harris then combined into a stronger single song. It tells the story of the infamous 'Mayflower' which sailed to the new world bringing the first English Puritans in 1620. The track features some exceptional solos with an Arabic flavour from Gers.

"The Longest Day" is the album's next epic track, retelling the history of D-Day and the Normandy landings on 6 June 1944. Inspitation for the track's title was borrowed from the written accounts by Cornelius Ryan. The song imagines the dread and fear that the troops experienced as they prepared for the 'Operation Neptune' landings through the quietly menacing, approximating verses which build up via Dickinson's crescendo to heroically recount the slow advance on the beaches in the pre-choruses. The track ultimately culminates in choruses infused with the dissonance of despair and hope. As Dickinson recounted, "Longest Day" speaks about "how humanity can get through something that awful. If you read some of the eyewitness accounts, it's terrifying ... I wanted to make the words sound like the actions – sound like throbbing engines chugging through the cold grey sea."

A lull in the storm, "Out Of The Shadows", which kicks off the album's second half, "actually is about being born. Until you appear, nobody knows who you are, but in the moment you do ... it's an absolutely blessed moment. And it's just a song reflecting on that," according to Dickinson. Another entry into the band's compendium of philosophical reflections on the nature of life and death, the song is relatively unique in the IRON MAIDEN repertoire. Not without reason was it most aptly described as an electric guitar-based mid-tempo 'power ballad'.

The album's first single "The Reincarnation Of Benjamin Breeg" is another mid-tempo number from Dave Murray but with a decidedly harder edge. Its structure resembles the Maiden's composition style embraced since the Bayley years. We find quiet intros and outros and a body of the song driven by a piledriving rhythm. The eponymous, fictitious character of "Benjamin Breeg" serves as a vessel for Dickinson to speak of cursedness and demons of the mind. It is not uncommon for the text to be interpreted as metaphorical reincarnation.

"A Matter Of Life And Death" sounds off with no less than three consecutive epics. "For The Greater Good Of God" is a typical Harris introspection, sounding musically like a more upbeat, positive, reworked development of "Judgement Of Heaven" from "The X Factor". It features staccato driving rhythm, supplemented by a rousing performance from Dickinson. Lyrically, the song explores the Janus-faced nature of religion – the word of God in scripture across the faiths being one of forgiveness and peace, with men who claim to observe such standards all too willing to kill for their version of them.

The penultimate track "Lord Of Light" continues along a similar theme and addresses the ambiguous nature of God's favourite archangel and fallen son, Lucifer, the bringer of light. "In trying to be a bit more even handed about this notion of heaven and hell, maybe the guy downstairs got a rough deal. Maybe he should go upstairs and ask for his money back, you know?" Dickinson once jested.

Drowned out by boos and chants of "Maiden, Maiden!", the moment was symbolic: a transfer of power was underway in the world of heavy metal – IRON MAIDEN were reclaiming their crown as the true defenders of the faith. Sure enough, from this point onwards, Maiden became the only band capable of drawing crowds the same size as METALLICA's.

The album closes with "The Legacy", an ambiguous Gers/Harris composition that may have been inspired by the 1990 film "Jacob's Ladder" about a soldier during the Vietnam War whose experiences result in bizarre visions and hallucinations. The song gives a general commentary on the basic disregard for human life by men in power. Opening with a nursery rhyme, the song is one of Gers's most interesting compositions, featuring a wholly unexpected Celtic chorus that sounds like a dizzying merry-go-round of doom.

Responsible for the cover artwork was Tim Bradsheet of "The Punisher" comic book fame, who himself was a lifelong IRON MAIDEN fan. The album cover features Eddie as an army general atop a tank, leading an army of zombie skeleton soldiers. The art was unconventional, in that Eddie is seen only from afar, but was likely intended to emphasise the equal value (or lack thereof) of all men in the theatre of war. "A Matter Of Life And Death" was released on 28 August 2006, and netted IRON MAIDEN their best chart positions worldwide since the halcyon days of the '80's. It went to #1 in Germany, Italy, Finland, Poland, and Sweden, #4 in the UK, Spain, and Austria, and an astonishing #9 on the US Billboard 200. Emboldened, the band decided to embark on the supporting tour by playing the entire album, something they had never done before. McBrain is even on record stating that he thinks "A Matter Of Life And Death" is the greatest album Maiden have ever made. Not to disappoint the fans, the tour did entail a handful of Maiden's classics as encores.

In 2007, for the second part of the tour entitled "A Matter Of The Beast" which celebrated the 25th anniversary of "The Number Of The Beast", the band changed the selist to include tracks of each od the two albums instead. Immediately after, IRON MAIDEN embarked on yet another spectacular tour in February 2008 to support the "Somewhere Back In Time" compilation. The band would play material from the "Powerslave" era through to the "Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son" era. As an added bonus, the band toured with the fabled "Powerslave" stage set. This tour also served as the backdrop for the unique documentary film "Iron Maiden: Flight 666" and its accompanying soundtrack. The filmed pictured the band's use of a converted Boeing 757 dubbed the "Ed Force One" and which was famously captained by one Bruce Dickinson to facilitate intercontinental travel by carrying the band, its crew, and 14 tonnes of equipment. This enabled the band to play to some 500,000 fans across 23 shows in 13 countries over just 45 days on the first leg of the tour alone. The documentary doubled as a concert film and documentary mostly about IRON MAIDEN's devoted fan base. It reached universal acclaim and was also shown in theatres upon its release. It reached #1 on the video charts in 17 countries including ... the US. Finding themselves back on top of the world of heavy metal, IRON MAIDEN went about in planning their next decade. *(gl)*

"THE FINAL FRONTIER"

2010

Following the momentous "Somewhere Back In Time" tour and a short break, IRON MAIDEN returned to the studio to record "The Final Frontier", their 15th studio album. The title had ominous overtones for many fans, with speculation buttressed by a comment from Steve Harris many years prior that 15 albums would be a "good number" to retire after. Fortunately, these suspicions couldn't have been further from the truth. IRON MAIDEN released another excellent album and embarked on another triumphant tour, neither of which would be their last.

In November 2009, IRON MAIDEN confirmed they had new material written and would head to Guillaume Tell studios to rehearse the new songs. Following a short Christmas break, the band then flew to Compass Point Studios in Nassau, Bahamas, to record the album with Kevin Shirley – the first time the band had been there since recording "Somewhere In Time" in 1986, signalling a return to production values of that era. Following a month spent recording at Compass Point, production was moved to Shirley's The Cave studios in Malibu, where songs were mixed and Dickinson laid down additional vocals. The album was completed in April 2010.

A stylistic departure from "A Matter Of Life And Death", "The Final Frontier" contained its share of surprises. Loosely connected by the theme of voyaging, whether into space, at sea, in the air, or into oneself, the album requires patience to understand, but is ultimately rewarding. As Dickinson explained, "I just thought we should call the next album "The Final Frontier" because it sort of is ... it could be, but it might not be! It means we can go back to space for an Eddie, and we haven't done that for a while. It has a certain romance to it." "The Final Frontier"

Photo: John McMurtrie

Live in Dallas, 2010

was the longest IRON MAIDEN record until its follow-up album "The Book Of Souls" at 76:34 minutes. It is possibly the most complex of their albums – particularly the album's second half, with four songs alone stretching over 36 minutes and showcasing some of Steve Harris's most progressive flourishes yet.

The band's new found progressiveness already becomes evident on the album's first track, "Satellite 15... The Final Frontier", an odd amalgamation of two separate tracks that nevertheless works in terms of building anticipation for the rest of the album. The "Satellite 15..." section works as an introduction to both song and album and consists of a muscular drum track and dissonant guitars that create an industrial science fiction atmosphere. Dickinson's otherworldly vocals evoke an astronaut left to drift in outer space desperately attempting contact earth. Before its ultimate conclusion it swiftly explodes into "The Final Frontier" proper, a solid, defiant rocker narrating the astronaut's final thoughts as he prepares to die. "The Final Frontier" thus has a double meaning, in the sense of both referring to space and life's final frontier, namely death. Featuring a solo in two parts shared by Smith and Murray, the song was released as a digital single with an accompanying music video.

The first single "El Dorado", also released as a free digital download one day before the supporting tour began on 8 June 2010. It had the distinction of winning the band their first Grammy Award for "Best Metal Performance" in 2011. The lyrics are a critique of the 2007-08 financial crisis, with Dickinson comparing bankers with the peddlers of the legend of "El Dorado", the mythical city of gold. "'El Dorado' has a cynical lyric about the economic crap that's been happening," he explained. "It seemed a bit like a perfect storm, people were borrowing money like crazy. I thought, 'This is really going to screw people up'." Musically, the song has a memorable, dirty riff to go with a dirty sound subtended by a pounding bass and with a solo traded between Smith, Murray, and Gers.

"Mother Of Mercy" once again finds IRON MAIDEN contemplating the plight of a soldier, the protagonist apparently seeking

TRACKLIST

1. Satellite 15... The Final Frontier
2. El Dorado
3. Mother Of Mercy
4. Coming Home
5. The Alchemist
6. Isle Of Avalon
7. Starblind
8. The Talisman
9. The Man Who Would Be King
10. When The Wild Wind Blows

SINGLES

deliverance from said mother – the angel of death – in the hope of ending his suffering. A Smith-Harris composition, the song differs from most Maiden war songs in that it begins with a full band as opposed to the usual acoustic intro, sounding like something that might have appeared on "Somewhere In Time". "Coming Home" is Dickinson's tribute to his reflections piloting Ed Force One back home "to Albion's land" – England. A 'power ballad' (at least in Maiden terms), the song features deeply poetic lyrics detailing the freedom from "borders that divide the earthbound tribes", suggesting a oneness across time and space and yet a feeling of the insignificance of human beings against the indifference of greater nature. The song would also provide a similar function to "Blood Brothers" live, uniting the audience in something greater than themselves.

Surprisingly, "The Alchemist" is the first bona fide up-tempo Maiden track on the album, not unlike a mixture between "The Mercenary" and "Man On The Edge". The song revolves around 16th century British mathematician and occultist Doctor John Dee, a complex and conflicted man who was an advisor to Queen Elizabeth I on one hand, and an occultist and alchemist on the other. Written by Gers, arranged by Harris, and with lyrics from Dickinson, the song is the shortest on the album and features a memorable solo from Gers. But the second half of the album is where IRON MAIDEN really stretch their progressive wings. The pulsating "Isle Of Avalon" is lyrically about the eponymous mythical island of Arthurian legend where Excalibur was forged, and where King Arthur was taken to recover after being mortally wounded. Avalon represents the "island where the souls of dead are reborn". Deeply atmospheric, lyrically pregnant with mythos and lore. Musically evocative of crawling towards a mirage, the Smith/Harris composition, at its core, borrows from the instrumental mid-section of "Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son" for the verses, while the mid-section here contains a very obvious musical tribute to the "Grace Under Pressure"-era of RUSH.

But this slice of excellence really just introduces the next track, "Starblind", the absolute highlight of the album. A Smith/Harris/Dickinson composition with distinctive rhythms, halting verses, and a thunderous delivery from Dickinson reflecting the deeply personal nature of his lyrics. At first listen, the song both atmospherically and lyrically appears to evoke the incinerating sun and interstellar theme delineated in "The Final Frontier". It then progresses to suggest "solar winds" as a metaphor for the release from religions, the so-called "carbon spider's web" within which ideologies entrap the human mind. Dickinson is effectively suggesting that it would never have been possible to leave the earth's atmosphere had such forms of thought prevailed. With them still persisting to this day, he thus exquisitely ties the themes of reason and space-time together and subtends them with a third, the threat of climate change. The splendour of Dickinson's poetry and conceptual excellence here cannot be stressed enough, and a study of the lyrics is thoroughly encouraged.

"The Talisman" is another entry into the series of IRON MAIDEN maritime epics. Galloping away like a close cousin to "The Alchemist", the song lyrically reprises the theme of Europeans setting sail for America in the 16th and 17th centuries in the hope of finding religious freedom. The heavy body of song replicates the harsh seas and the story of the perilous voyage itself. "The Man Who Would Be King" borrows its title from the Rudyard Kipling short story from 1888 and the 1975 film adaptation starring Sean Connery, but appears to have little else in common with them, telling the story instead of a man driven into exile for taking someone's life and questioning whether it was all necessary. The song could have benefited from additional editing, but musically accompanies the narrator's inner conflict well.

"The Final Frontier" was the longest IRON MAIDEN record until follow-up album "The Book Of Souls" at 76:34 minutes, and possibly the most complex – particularly the album's second half, with four songs alone stretching over 36 minutes and showcasing some of Steve Harris's most progressive flourishes yet.

Finally, the album closer "When The Wild Wind Blows" takes its cue from the famous 1982 graphic novel and later animated film "When The Wind Blows" by Raymond Briggs depicting a nuclear attack on Britain by the USSR from the perspective of a retired old couple, but incorporating the classic Maiden twist. Instead of being annihilated by the bomb, the couple, having prepared assiduously for survival, refuse to believe the news that thermonuclear war is not going to happen after all, and commit suicide instead. The song appears to be a comment by Harris on people who become consumed with apocalyptic thoughts to the point of seeing them through, irrespective of reason or reality. Told musically as another Celtic fable, the track is a fairly by-the-numbers Harris composition containing many of his habitual songwriting trademarks.

Featuring artwork by Melvyn Grant depicting the most gruesome Eddie in years, the album, released on 13 August 2010 and achieved enormous commercial success, netting IRON MAIDEN their fourth #1 album in the UK and #1 positions in another 27 (!) countries. Amazingly, the album found itself as high as #4 on the US Billboard 200, the band's highest ever chart position across the pond. Receiving almost universal critical acclaim and with a tour lasting for over a year, performing to over two million people across 98 shows in 36 countries on five continents and again piloted by Dickinson on Ed Force One, it seemed as if the band really had broken through their own "final frontier". Naturally, this demanded a celebration with the March 2012 release of "En Vivo", another official live album and film this time recorded in Santiago, Chile.

Astonishingly, upon their return, they heralded in another golden era. In June 2012, IRON MAIDEN embarked on the "Maiden England" world tour, a tour designed to re-enact the legendary "Seventh Son" tour featuring most of the setlist from the seminal "Maiden England" VHS, and with a similar ice-world stage set but outdoing the original with new technology. The "Maiden England" tour would last two years, finally concluding at Knebworth on 5 July 2014. Spanning 100 shows in 32 countries in front of an estimated two million people it represented one of their greatest tours yet. Meanwhile, Steve Harris sprung quite the surprise on fans by finding the time to release an album with his solo band BRITISH LION in September 2012, a band he had been mentoring since the early 1990's. A more mainstream '70's-influenced rock than metal album, the eponymous "British Lion" album received largely rave reviews, prompting BRITISH LION to go on a club tour in the middle of IRON MAIDEN's "Maiden England" tour in February and March 2013. As for IRON MAIDEN, the only question remaining after the mammoth years of 2010-2014 was: what, back here on earth, next? *(gl)*

Live in Dallas, 2010

Photos: John McMurtrie

Photo: John McMurtrie

IRON MAIDEN

Photo: Geoffrey Lee

"THE BOOK OF SOULS"

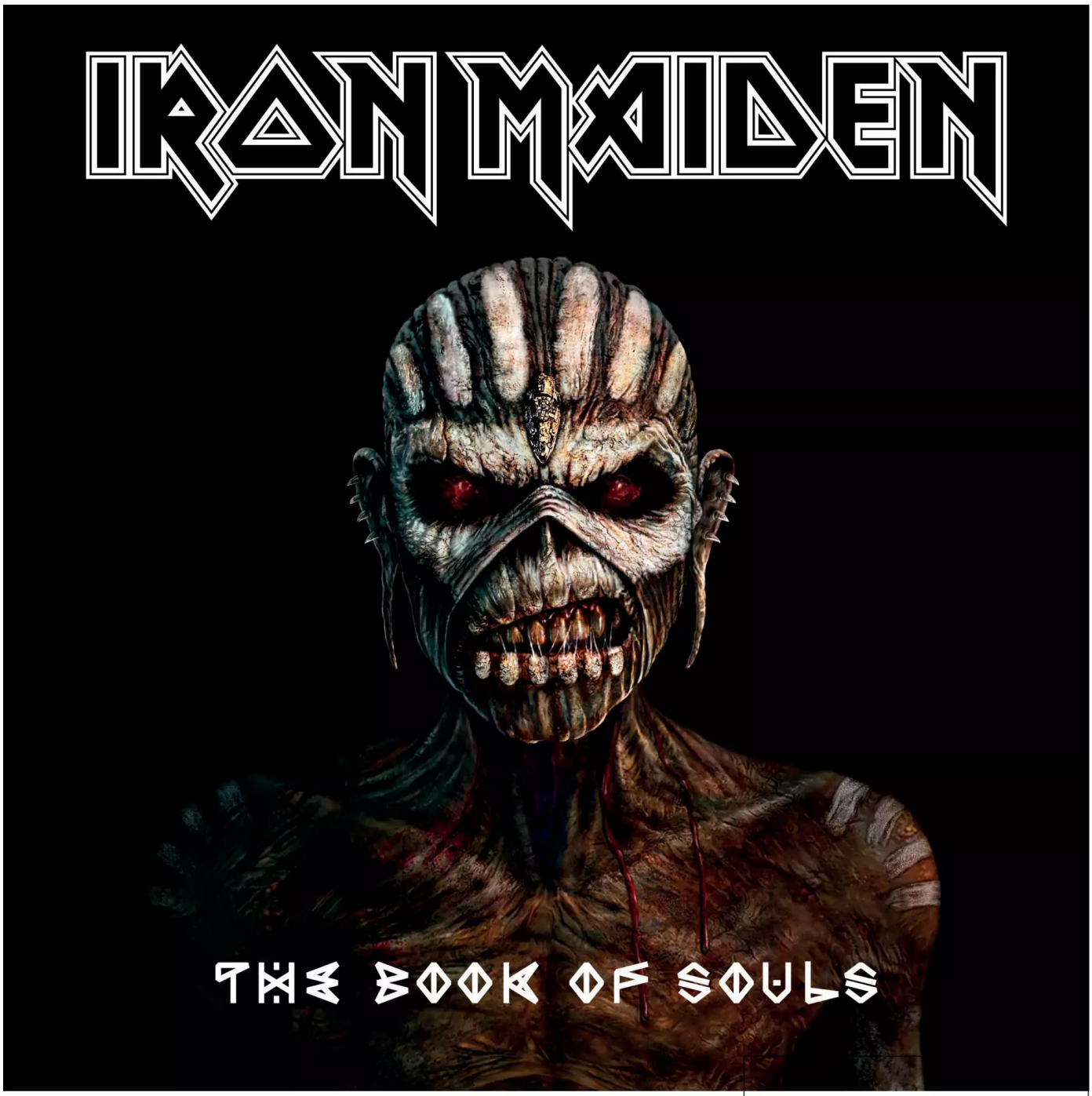
2015

Five years elapsed before IRON MAIDEN presented the follow-up to "The Final Frontier". To the relief of fans the colossal double album "The Book Of Souls", released on 4 September 2015, bore no cheeky hints regarding the band's future. But the fact that this was the longest period between two studio albums yet for Maiden was due not only to excessive touring, but also to more solemn reasons.

Photo: Warner

Bruce Dickinson was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma (tongue cancer) at the end of 2014, putting IRON MAIDEN in a state of shock and forcing the band to put all activities on hold. Otherwise in overall excellent physical health, Dickinson had suspected the symptoms of a growth on his tongue and neck, but opted not to get an MRI until recordings for the new album had been completed. Dickinson then underwent a gruelling seven-week treatment of radiation and chemotherapy, which was successful and without complications. In May 2015, IRON MAIDEN's management announced that Dickinson had completed his therapy and that the band would now concentrate on releasing their new opus, but it would take Dickinson another six months of physical rehabilitation to recover from the side-effects of his treatment, and another ten before he would be able to sing again.

In the summer of 2014 the band had already returned to Guillaume Tell Studios, Paris with producer Kevin Shirley to work on new material. Most of the tracks were conceived and rehearsed in the studio, again giving recordings a live feel and the musicians opportunities to experiment further. Recording was completed by December 2014 before Dickinson received his diagnosis, so it was not an inspiration for any of the material, but this does not overshadow the feat of opting to finish the album first. "None of us knew", Harris recalled. "He'd sung fantastic in the studio. He sounds better than ever, so there was no indication there was a problem with his throat ... he had a test and it came back that he had a tumour. It was scary stuff." The underlying theme of mortality on "The Book Of Souls", then, was coincidental, but



TRACKLIST

1. If Eternity Should Fail
2. Speed Of Light
3. The Great Unknown
4. The Red And The Black
5. When The River Runs Deep
6. The Book Of Souls
7. Death Or Glory
8. Shadows Of The Valley
9. Tears Of A Clown
10. The Man Of Sorrows
11. Empire Of The Clouds

SINGLES

not incongruous. "As you get older, you start thinking about your own mortality and those things more," Harris observed wistfully.

The result was the first double album in IRON MAIDEN history, a staggering opus with eleven tracks and a total playing time of just over 92 minutes with a more organic yet polished sound than its predecessor. Although the album is not a concept album per se, the themes of "souls" and mortality run throughout, ergo the album title. "[Steve and I] both thought that "The Book Of Souls" was an obvious-sounding title of an album. And it kind of gave us a theme for the stage set, for pyramids and people having their hearts torn out." Dickinson recounted. Three songs alone surpassed the ten-minute mark, with Dickinson's "Empire Of The Clouds" offering 18 minutes of epic storytelling bliss, dwarfing even previous record holder "Rime Of The Ancient Mariner".

But other tracks on "The Book Of Souls" are equally noteworthy. Album opener "If Eternity Should Fail" was the first IRON MAIDEN song since "Powerslave" to flow from Dickinson's pen alone and is essential to setting the tone for the album. "If Eternity Should Fail" "was written for a solo album that I had planned," Dickinson recounted. "It was completely demoed and finished. And the band just copied it from the demo." Inspired by a Marvel comic which also furnished the title and composed with a view towards a concept album "about a machine [designed by Dr. Necropolis] that steals people's souls" hinted at in the intro and outro. This wouldn't be the first time Harris convinced Dickinson to save superior solo work for IRON MAIDEN. Probably the strongest track overall, rich with harmonies, and reminiscent of Dickinson's solo work, "If Eternity Should Fail" was also a perfect fit for the overarching theme of Mayan civilization in the live set, kicking off shows on the accompanying tour to perfection.

The first single outing "Speed Of Light", released ahead of the album on 14 August 2015, was the first indication that IRON MAIDEN would once again not disappoint. Opening with arpeggios and leading into a practically NWOBHM riff, accompanied by some rare cowbell from McBrain and the quintessential Dickinson banshee scream, the song launches into a propulsive groove to sustain Dickinson's cosmological musings. Next, "The Great Unknown" opens with a quiet, introspective passage that builds with a crescendo into a halting, inquisitive heaviness reflecting the subject matter: the great unknown, not only of death, but of the future and humanity's destiny, and also of what causes self-destructive choices within the individual. Complete with biblical references, the song traces the distortion of virtue to violence, the resulting death begetting more death as well as the desire for retribution beginning the cycle anew in a different time and place.

"The Red And The Black", probably inspired by the 1830 novel "Le Rouge Et Le Noir" by 19th century French realist writer Stendhal, is the first of two Harris ten minute-plus epics on the album. Lyrically, it addresses dualisms in life. The red and the black also refers to the two colours in a deck of cards. As such, the sprawling song, with its crowd sing-along chorus, is also about the randomness that assigns fates, which didn't make its convoluted verses any easier to sing for Dickinson: "I've written a few like that in the past, and Bruce does freak out a bit about it," Harris admitted. "In my opinion, Bruce is such a great singer that he can get his head around anything." Dickinson surely experienced similar frustration with the next song, "Where The River Runs Deep", sandwiched in between the over-long "The Red And The

Epically eerie, densely atmospheric, and transporting the listener to the pyramids this time of the ancient civilization of the Mayans, "The Book Of Souls" is conceptually if not musically reminiscent of "Powerslave".

Black" and "The Book Of Souls", a likely autobiographical song for a band reflecting on its legacy.

The title track "The Book Of Souls", penned by Harris and Gers, is the second pillar carrying the album's theme, again hitting the note, theme and length to perfectly complement the album. Epically eerie, densely atmospheric, and transporting the listener to the pyramids this time of the ancient civilization of the Mayans, the track is conceptually if not musically reminiscent of "Powerslave". "It intrigued me, in the same way that I was interested in ancient Egypt when we did "Powerslave"," Harris explained. "The Mayans believed in the Underworld and were scared of losing their souls. That mystical element was the key to the song." But the song also hearkens back to "Powerslave" in another way: the fast midsection that contrasts with the lumbering corpus of the track is a welcome nod to "Losfer Words (Big 'Orra)". "There's a fast-flowing riff on the track that is actually quite similar to 'Losfer Words'," Harris continued. "The new one is in a different key and the notes are slightly different, but it has a similar feel, let's put it that way ... And really, why shouldn't we sound like our old selves a bit?"

"Death Or Glory" kicks off the slightly weaker second part of the double album in the typical IRON MAIDEN fashion. An upbeat, straightforward rocker about WWI aerial battles in triplanes invoking the infamous 'Red Baron' Manfred von Richthofen. In true tradition, it checks the box for at least one war song per Maiden album. The unusual "Shadows Of The Valley" strongly references "Wasted Years" with its opening riff (and speaks of a "sea of madness" in the lyrics ...) before giving way to a stomping tune subtended by synths, making it all but impossible to miss a deliberate nod to "Somewhere In Time". Next, the mid-paced "Tears Of A Clown" was inspired by the suicide of comic Robin Williams in 2014. "My favourite song," Dickinson commented on a rare topic for IRON MAIDEN to address. "I ask myself how he could be so depressed when he always seemed to be so happy." Penultimate track "The Man Of Sorrows", the title originally a Biblical prefiguration of the Messiah, is the only contribution on the album from Dave Murray and speaks of earthly tribulations in a musically uncommon turn for IRON MAIDEN.

Finally, concluding the album is "Empire Of The Clouds", now the mother of all IRON MAIDEN epics. Retelling the story of the famous R101 airship disaster of 1930, Dickinson's 18-minute behemoth ballad features piano, orchestral arrangements, and a musical narrative to accompany the flow of events that led to the tragedy. The R101 was the world's largest aircraft at 731 feet in length and crashed during its maiden overseas voyage in France on 5 October 1930, killing all but six on board. "To tell that story," Dickinson recounted, "I thought, it's a big job – oh, go on then! So I started putting it together piece by piece. It was difficult, because I wanted to get everything as historically and technically accurate, but still making it ... poetic." Far from being a trained pianist, Dickinson pieced the song together by tinkering with a Steinway Grand in the studio across the four months of writing and recording the album.

Helped along mainly by drummer Nicko McBrain to structure the song, Dickinson builds the narrative both musically and poetically to its dramatic climax, which naturally is when the airship crashes. "That's the slow-mo shot of the movie, when suddenly you see everything blowing up and the music stops. That was the moment I had in my head." And that is exactly the effect conjured in the song. If this were to be the final song on the final IRON MAIDEN studio album, it would be a fitting end indeed, encapsulating everything Maiden is about: musical grandeur, epic storytelling, and boundless ambition, something not lost on Steve Harris, who didn't begrudge Dickinson the honour of the band's new signature song: "I think it's a masterpiece – I think I can say that because I didn't write it! It sounds like Maiden but it's totally different from what we've done before."

Released on 4 September 2015 and featuring Eddie artwork this time by Mark Wilkinson of MARILLION fame, the LP climbed to the top of the charts in no less than 24 countries, delivering IRON MAIDEN their second consecutive #1 in the UK and achieving the same in Germany and a host of other countries. Receiving near-unanimous rave reviews from the critics, the album was also successful in the US, again reaching #4 on the Billboard 200 and selling over 150,000 physical units in that market alone within just a few months. Naturally, IRON MAIDEN then embarked on a world tour to promote "The Book Of Souls" in February of 2016 once Dickinson received his medical all-clear, a tour that would last until July 2017, span six continents and encompass 117 shows in stadiums around the world, playing to well over a million people. Invariably, a live album, "The Book Of Souls: Live Chapter" would follow on 17 November 2017, reflecting the definitive setlist from the tour with each song recorded in a different location. But what would our indefatigable heroes try next? *(gl)*

AN INTERVIEW WITH

BRUCE DICKINSON

METAL ENTREPRENEUR

Location: Berlin, Grand Hyatt • Date: 15 July 2015
Occasion: promoting "The Book Of Souls"

Let's start with the album: Is there an interest in Mayan culture or how did you come up with "The Book Of Souls", with that theme?
Yeah, no, no. Not me! Nothing to do with me. It's Steve's song. So, he's totally developed an interest in Mayan culture. Not sure why. But he has, so hence he thought: "Call it 'The Book Of Souls'." Yeah, OK. You know?

So the title was first and then you sort of worked around it?
No, he came with the whole song complete. And when thinking about what to call the album, I mean "The Book Of Souls" sounds like a pretty good IRON MAIDEN title, doesn't it?

However, the opening track – which was written by yourself – is in fact questioning the Mayan concept of eternity. Now, isn't that a bit odd? What made you put that in the very beginning?
Yeah, well …

Like: What if this fails?
Well, "If Eternity Should Fail" is actually a Marvel Comic. It's a Marvel comic episode: Dr. Strange. It's a Dr. Strange against Mephisto episode. Well, it was always against Mephisto in every episode. You know, the good guy against the bad guy. Dr. Strange is a kind of occult superhero in Marvel, and so I bought sort of reprints of all the Marvel – well, not all, a lot of the Marvel comics – when I was on tour. And I was just going through them, cause I was thinking about doing a solo record. And I thought: "You know what? I'll have a read through these because it might just tweak my imagination a little bit." And so I was looking at Dr. Strange and there was this title: "If Eternity Should Fail". I went: "Oh, what a great title! My God, what a brilliant title!" So, I scribbled that down. And that was going to be my album title for my solo album. And I demoed the song "If Eternity Should Fail" completely. Exactly as it has been recorded by IRON MAIDEN. So, all they did was copy exactly what I did on my solo album – or what would have been my solo album. Steve did say it was a bit short, so he wanted an extra verse. So I wrote an extra verse. The spoken word bit at the end, I did ask him about that as well. Because one of my intentions was that I was going to be telling a story – it was going to be a concept album about a machine that steals people's souls. So the spoken word at the end of "If Eternity Should Fail" actually introduces one of the characters in the story: Dr. Necropolis. And so I did ask Steve, I said: "Look, I'm not sure how people will understand this without the rest of it." He said: "No, no, no, it sounds great", he said, "and it does talk about souls." I went: "Yep. Take your point, we'll leave it." (chuckles)

And that became like the umbrella for the whole thing? I mean, those souls pop up quite a bit in the lyrics.
Yeah, it does come up in quite a few lyrics, but then on the other hand, I suppose, you could also call an IRON MAIDEN album "The Book Of Dark", and you could also say: "Oh, every song has 'dark' in it somewhere, you know?" (chuckles)

It's funny where things come from, and where they end up …
Yeah, I mean, everybody thinks that everything on an album is planned. And it's not. It looks that way afterwards. Which makes you think about things like the bible. And you go: "Of course, it's not planned, it's just a bloody accident. They're making it all up as they go along." And at the end of it, somebody says: "Aaaaah, it was all prophecy!" My ass, you know, I mean …

What on earth made you come up with horns and strings – which is something you haven't done before, have you?
Well, having written "Empire" and I wrote it on piano and so when you write on piano, it just suggests things, you know. Because as I was writing it, I mean I was writing it and could hear it sort of like: harpsichords, tubular bells, timpanis, all this stuff as I was going through it. And I thought: "Wow", you know. So, yeah: French horns – yeah. Cellos – tick. Oboe – tick, you know?

How will you recreate that live? Will certain members of the band swap their instruments for horns and stuff?
No, no, I doubt we will ever do that song live. I don't think we will ever do it live.

Well, "Empires" is quite something. Apart from the fact that it's 18 minutes long.
Yeah, yeah, yeah …

The longest track Maiden have ever written – how could that happen?
Well, it just sort of ended up that way, really. I mean, it is an extraordinary story. I think when people get the album and they hear "Empire" and then they probably are intrigued as to: "OK, what was this airship, the R101?" And then you go and you google or wikipedia the story, and you find out what the story was. It's an incredible story, you know.

The largest airship ever built …
Ever built. Ever. Yeah, yeah. And all the

Photo: John McMurtrie

"Given the choice between being rich or being interesting: I'd rather be interesting."

arrogance and government and empire, the British Empire that goes with it. This was the first of what was going to be 20 or 30 of these giant ships that was going to connect the British Empire. Which in 1930 was (exhale) the most powerful thing in the world. So, the most powerful nation in the world – in 1930, right, just about, still – was going to connect London with Cairo, with India, with Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia. Round the world, these ships would be flying. And of course, the Germans were doing it with the Zeppelins across the South Atlantic, across the Atlantic: A regular trans-Atlantic service. Very reliable, very safe. And people forget how dangerous flying was by airplane. And the airship represented luxury, speed … and the Germans did a great job. I mean, it was still dangerous, although they tried to minimize the dangers. But you look at the problems with the technology, you know, the engines weren't powerful enough. The structures were weak. The materials were completely inadequate, the control of the thing required a crew of like 50. You know, everything, the weather forecasting was minimal, so nobody knew what storm you might be going into with any great accuracy. And when you got to the other end, landing the airship, it didn't actually land, because it was lighter than air. But mooring it was incredibly difficult, time consuming, and potentially dangerous …

As we saw with the German Zeppelin in New York …
Yeah, with the Hindenburg, yeah, absolutely. But with the exception of the Hindenburg, the German Zeppelins were about as safe as they ever could be, given the technology. So, it was an extraordinary era. But the R101 was a different case. Many mistakes were made, lots of decisions were made due to commercial pressure, government pressure. The ship was never tested properly … there's a whole long, long list of things …

Sounds just like the Titanic, doesn't it?
It is the Titanic of the air, it really is. And hence there is a line in the song, just to give you some idea of how big: The Titanic would fit inside the airship. Completely. It was so big.

Says the man who's currently building the largest plane in history?
In the same hangar. The same hangar where they built the airship, the R101, is the hangar that we have the airship in now. It's the same, it's still there, it still exists. In fact there are two hangars: One they built the R101. Next door they built the sister ship, the R100. The R100 flew across the Atlantic and came back. But that was built by private enterprise. The R101 was built by the government. And it was a competition to see which one would fly first, and the private enterprise won. But they made some compromises, you know. They used petrol engines in the R100, because the engines were easily available. They were lighter and the fuel was more efficient. But the government said: "No, no, no, no, diesel engines are safer." So they delayed and put diesel engines on. But the diesel engines were so heavy, the only ones available were powering locomotives in Canada. So they shipped over five locomotives from Canada and put them on the airship. Now the airship was so heavy, it couldn't take any passengers. So they had to make it even bigger – which made it structurally weaker. Oh, it's just an incredible story. I could go on all night, but I won't bother you now.

When are you launching that plane? Next year?
Well, we've already flown it in America.

So it is slow, but it can pretty much carry anything?
No, we can go about hundred and … we can cruise at about a 120 kph. But we can do it for five days. So crossing the Atlantic: not a problem. All the problems with the airships, we've solved with the hybrid vehicle that we have. So, structures – we understand structures now. Materials – we use mylar and kevlar. Engines – we have very powerful, light engines, gas turbines. Easy, you know. Lifting gas – well, we use helium not hydrogen. It's non-flammable. Flight controls – we use "fly by wire". Well, actually we use "fly by light". We use optical signal fly by light, like an Airbus. So it's just a side stick, like an airliner. Crew of 50? No! Crew of two! And the great thing is: The whole vehicle is heavier than air. So it lands vertically and takes off vertically. Doesn't use a runway …

Could that be a vehicle for Maiden to tour Maiden with?
Oh, hey, listen: If we could get from A to B in one of our airships, then we would. But it'll be two or three years before that's possible.

In addition to the plane there's Cardiff Aviation, said to be creating nearly 1000 jobs at one point, if all goes well.
We're going to be approaching, next year we'll be probably 200 to 250. Cause we just started the airline, so the airline is up and running now. The airplane is down in … 737 is down in Milan, Malpensa, at the moment, waiting to go fly for a Spanish charter company called Albastar. So I helped to deliver her on Friday. And that was her proving flight. So that's all approved now, we've got a certificate, operating certificate. So that's ready to go. So we have cabin crew, pilots, everybody down in Milan right now.

So your goal is to build an airline, a proper one?
Oh yeah, no, we are. The second airplane arrives in August.

Re-building Air Astraeus in a way?
No, we are. We will be … when Astraeus went bust – was it three and a bit years ago – I did say: "We're going to put this back together." It's taken me two or three years, but we're going to put it back together. And actually, we should be profitable in year one, with this airline. That's my prediction, anyway, touch wood. The maintenance business, we started out in year one with about a turnover in the first year of about a million euros. We haven't got to the end of year two yet, but our turnover is already five million euros. So we're looking at next year between ten and 14 million euros turnover for the maintenance business.

Not to forget Air Djibouti, which you're involved in, too?
Air Djibouti, we're getting very involved with and we're coming close to putting the first cargo aircraft in and out of Djibouti. And I think by Christmas I would like to be operating Europe to Djibouti. And in the New Year we're looking at operating, they want to operate the United States, and China, India, Dubai as well.

How do you find time for a Maiden album with all that going on?
Oh, doing a Maiden album's brilliant. Because you know what? I just say: "Look guys. Sorry, I'm busy!" (laughs) "Delegate!" You know.

But is that what you need? Do you need so many things at once? Are you like an entrepreneur?
No, I am an entrepreneur. Yeah, no question about that! (laughs) I must confess: I'd like to be an entrepreneur with other people's money, but (chuckles) doesn't everybody? (laughs) But no, I mean, we're in a situation right now where we got a little bit of a gap. So I'll be working pretty much flat out till Christmas on developing the airlines and everything else. And then let's see what happens next year. Cause you never know, I might need to take some time off. You never know IRON MAIDEN might go on tour, who knows? (chuckles)

On the other hand it's a double album and the longest one you've ever recorded.
Yeah.

And it was done live in the studio.
Yeah.

So, there is still some fire left in this band?

Oh God, yeah. Doing a Maiden album, I mean, this is not like doing work. You know? This is not work, this is … yeah, it is work in that we're working, but it's not, mentally, I don't … For some people, work is stuff they don't enjoy that makes them money to do things they do enjoy. And for me, I always thought: "I should try and make it so that everything I do I enjoy." And then I can call it work, but hey, sometimes you don't want to get out of bed. That's the worst it ever gets.

And if you want to be rich: go rob a bank?
Yeah, you know, given the choice between being rich or being interesting: I'd rather be interesting.

Steve Harris is quoted saying there won't be more than 15 Maiden albums. Now that concept is no longer valid, is it?
No, the wheels have fallen off that bus. I don't know where we go after this one. I'm not going to make any predictions. There's no point in speculating. But I was all in favor of maybe carrying on. (laughs) I said: "While we're here, well, why don't just make another one while we're at it?" But there's always time for that.

Is it until they send you home in a box now?
Yes, I see no reason whatsoever – the concept of retirement, I don't get retirement, you know? The only thing I'll say about retirement is: If you want to stop doing something, yeah, that's fine. But I would only stop doing something because I wanted to do something else.

However, over the last couple of years Maiden has become like a household name. The band is no longer for metal fans only.
Mm-hmm …

Would you agree that it has taken on another dimension?
Yeah, yeah …

Like a monster you created?
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yes. Well, there's nothing much we can do about that, so just (chuckles) just carry on, really. (laughs)

Well, as you once put it: It's the only job in the world where men in their 50s can wear the most outrageous clothing and get away with it.
That's right, yes. It's the only place you can wear your underpants on the outside of your trousers and not be arrested.

And there are some brilliant Maiden cover bands out there.
Yes! No, including us! I mean, interestingly, the only difference between us and an IRON MAIDEN cover band is that we do new IRON MAIDEN albums. And that, funnily enough – whilst it's a joke, it's also a good point. You see what, you know, without doing new albums, really after a while you just become a karaoke band of yourself. And that's not good enough, that's not a good enough reason for me to give up a big chunk of my life to go on tour, to go and just do a load of old songs. Hey, the money's great. Terrific. It's not enough. Needs to be more than that, because this band is so important to so many people, it needs to be more than just: "Hey, it's all about the money." It needs to be more, we need to be doing new music. So, that's why this album is so important. That's why when it turned out it was a double album, we went: "Great!" Nobody does double albums anymore. Except us. And our manager said: "Oh, a double album! Oh, what a pain in the ass! Oh, marketing, that's a pain in the butt! Oh! Can't you do like GUNS N' ROSES 'Use Your Illusions'?" We went: "No, fuck yourself! No, we're not going to do GUNS N' ROSES, we're not GUNS N' ROSES". This is one album at one time. And actually a double album is indescribably cool for metalheads, for real fans of Maiden, they'll love it. As long as it doesn't suck, you know? And I don't think it does.

So have you met Bruce Chickinson yet?
Bruce Chickinson? Yeah, yeah, yeah – no, no, no, but I'm sure, I'm sure I'm about to. Is this Foghorn Leghorn meets, what is it, you know? I don't know …

First of all there's MAIDEN UNITED which is an all acoustic tribute band that sounds really interesting.
Bruce Chickinson – oh, you mean there's a, there's a …

Bruce Chickinson's the singer for the IRON MAIDENS, the girl band from LA.
Oh, hang on a minute …

They all got Maiden names.
Yeah, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah! No, I've seen, I think it might be the IRON MAIDENS. I saw them in Mexico. We all went to see them.

How was that for you?
We were watching them, and I said to Steve, I said: "This is a really weird question, Steve". I said: "But looking at them", I said: "Would you fuck yourself?" (laughs) And he went: "Oh, I don't know, but we've all been thinking it!", you know? It's very, very weird! (laughs)

With all these activities going on: What was it like to be diagnosed with cancer?

How much of a wake-up call was that?
Yeah, that was a full stop, you know? That's the car hits the brick wall and the airbag comes out, and you sort of go: "OK." So when I got the diagnosis through, the doc said: "What are your plans?" I said: "Plans?" I said: "As of right now", I said, "I have no plans." I said: "As of right now I start getting rid of this. That's my full time job. Nothing else matters." So, that was it. So I told everybody that there was this thing. I said: "OK, right, you've got to know I've got this, and starting January 5th I start treatment." I said: "So, I'll be OK for four or five weeks, and then everything's going to go shitty. And I'll be like useless for about three weeks. And then hopefully I start getting better." I said: "But you can kind of write me off." So I went into the treatment going: "OK, what's going to happen? How does the treatment work? Why does the treatment work? What machines are you using? How do they work? What are the drugs? How do the drugs work? What are they going to do to me? What are the outside effects? How will I get better? When will I get better? How will I know?" You know? And then I researched everything. So, I researched the drugs, I researched the toxicology, I researched the cancer. My oncologist was fantastic, because he explained to me the way the whole process works and why it works. So I kept going back to him with questions, saying: "So, why do you do this then? And why is this important?" He said: "Oh! That's because the cancer works like this, and we need to do this to it to get it to work." And I said: "Aha! OK, understood", you know. So I really wanted to understand exactly what was happening to my body. I wanted to be able to measure it myself. I wanted to be able to not control it, because you can't control it …

… but sort of defending it with knowledge, if you put it like that?
Yeah, you have to, yeah, exactly. And I just, look, I said: "I am my own science project for the next nine weeks." I've had enough radiation to kill 13 people. So over, over 33 days. So I had 33 radiation treatments, and 9 weeks of chemotherapy at the same time. And it was kind of an interesting experience. Not one I would wish to repeat. But: You just get on with it. You get on, and you get on and do it, you know? Thousands of people in the world have to do exactly the same. It's not just me. (chuckles) Just I happen to be quite kind of high profile, you know?

And you're in great shape, which probably helps a lot, or?
Lots of things that help, but I think positive mental attitude. People say it's like a cliché, but to some extent I think it really is true. And I mean, I said: "OK, how do I give myself

the best chance here?" Cause I went in and I examined my chances. So, you do look at the medical literature and the statistics. And you say: "OK. So, as of now, until we get further tests and results, my chances of survival are 60/40. Not great, but still slightly positive. Now, if I get some results that show that it's human papillomavirus related, my chances go up to 80% or greater. I'll take that." So, Christmas Eve, I get the phone call. "Good news! Good news about the bad news is, yeah, it's a human papillomavirus tumor." Boom, suddenly you're in a whole different survival category. And I don't smoke. That puts you even more into the survival category, and also increases the chances of it not coming back by a huge amount, I mean, huge. Like you can't believe. So, I had a great set of doctors, great set of nurses, who predicted all the side effects. And almost to the day could say: "This is the day when you'll start to feel better", you know? And they were right. So, there were some experiences I've never had before. (laughs) Some I really don't want to repeat! (laughs) But all of them, whilst sometimes you can sort of like have a moment when you're sitting there and you're going: "You know what? I'm the only person in the room, and even I am feeling humiliated (laughs) by what I'm about to do to myself!" (laughs) But you don´t want to know! You sit there and you go: "Other people have to do this every day."

You mean it was worse than crawling a hotel corridor in Tokyo, being totally pissed and eating leftovers from returned food trays?
Oh, yeah, much worse than that, yeah! (laughs) Much worse! But funny! I mean, I hate to say it: In amongst all of this there is some very, very black humor, you know?

Well, you got to. Otherwise, how are you going to deal with it?
Yeah. You know. And you have to be positive about it, you know.

And they've granted you until the end of the year to recover or how long is it going to be before you'll hit the road?
I asked the oncologist, I said: "Look, before we start, how long is it going to take before I'm better?" And he said: "Probably about a year." OK? And so, he said: "I'll give you an example", he said. "I had an RAF fighter pilot with exactly the same tumor as you. And he was sat in that chair, exactly the same moment, right, as I'm talking to you now." And he said: "And the next time that I saw him, and he was 100% fit and fat and healthy was almost a year later."

But that tumor is not a typical pilot thing, is it?
No, no – so my first thought was: "I'm going to beat that guy!" (chuckles) And not that I'm competitive, but I thought: "OK, RAF fighter pilot? I'm going to beat him." And that was my attitude that this was like – I'm a little bit competitive, I think it's fair to say. (chuckles) And whilst you can't be competitive too much, having that in the background, is like: "Yeah, I'm going to do this in less than a year". And in fact, for the rest of me, the guy can't believe that I'm jumping around and bouncing around. I mean, I saw him three weeks after I got finished with treatment, and I ran up five flights of stairs, cause that's what I did the first time I saw him. And then the time when I was before that I was still in the middle of treatment and I had to take the lift, cause I was too tired. And this time I ran up, and he went: "Did you just run up five flights of stairs?" I went: "Yep." He went: "Wow!" He said: "OK. I got three patients at the moment with the same tumor as you, the same period of time out of treatment, and they're in hospital, and they're on feeding tubes in their stomach. And you are – let me guess ..." And I said: "Well, I'm eating steak and I'm ... you know." I said: "It's still, there's a lot of things hurt. There's a lot of things", I said, "but I'm eating solid food, I'm running around. And yeah, I feel tired, but you know what? I'm getting better. And in a week's time I'm going to shave off this horrible moustache that I grew", so, you know ...

You grew a moustache?
Yeah, I grew a sort of a Baader-Meinhof style moustache. It was either the Baader-Meinhof gang or a bad porn star or actually – I had a picture taken, I was wearing a hard hat, cause I was at a building site. And I went: "Oh my god, it's YMCA! It's got to go!" So, yeah, I got rid of the moustache. (chuckles)

And how are as Bruce von Richthofen in your Fokker G-CDXR-replica?
Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah ...

Do you put on a Red Baron outfit for that?
No, no, no, no, no, we're not that sad! No, I just wear a flying hat and goggles and a regular flying suit. But, yeah, I might be flying her actually this weekend. We've got to go and do some practice for our displays that we do as a team.

Well, if you look at it from a technical standpoint, those guys must have been real good pilots back then, wouldn't you agree?
Yeah, well, it was a different world. It was a whole different way of flying. And in actual fact to go back to it in the machines, I mean my machine that I have is a full size replica of a Dreidecker, you know. The engine is not 100% the same, it's a radial engine, but it's not the rotary engine that was fitted in the original. And that's a compromise. 1, because you really can't get a hold of the rotary engines, and 2, because we need to get the airplane from one place to another and be able to start the thing and actually use it usably for displays. The rotary engine, they took off from the one airfield and they landed at another airfield, but there'd be ground crews and all kinds of people to support the airplane, whereas we have to do it on our own. So, it's slightly different.

Moving on to jolly old Eddie, he's one of the most versatile mascots in the history of rock music, isn't he?
Yeah, yeah.

What's your favorite Eddie then? Is it the radio DJ?
I'm loving the Egypt one. I think the Egyptian one is great. I think the "Live After Death" one is fantastic as well. So, they would be my two favorites. Although as the Walk-On Eddie, I think the "Somewhere In Time One" takes some beating.

He's really taken on a life of his own, hasn't he?
Well, he's at Comic Con, I believe. We got a load of specials that have been done for Comic Con. Some of them are absolutely brilliant.

When you think of it: It all started with Rod putting a mask on during your gigs, making a complete fool of himself ...
Yeah.

What was the thing behind the drums covering everything in fake blood?
Originally, it was just a like a Kabuki mask from a joke store or something. And then, I think it was Rod's idea to put a weird personality on the face. And then they had made a rubber mask, and a leather jacket. And then it became symbolic of every crazy adolescent fantasy. And then we just started to grow him from there, you know ...

When we talked for the last album, we had this conversation about your audience, which is mainly rock n' roll families: There is dad, who is totally wasted. There is the 13 year old kid with the devil horn. And there is mom, the MILF. So it's like Maiden gigs are MILF-land!
(laughs) You're lucky! (laughs) I'm not sure, I'm not sure – I'm 56, I'm 57 next year, I'm not sure I can get MILFs anymore! (laughs) Who knows what I get! You know. But, no, I mean, it's very strange the profile of our audience actually now is – as the audience gets bigger, the profile of the audience gets younger. So, that's good to know.

While your job is still trying to minimize arenas into clubs, at least mentally?
One has to, absolutely. I mean, the opening lines to the opening track to the album: "Start to speak with the Shaman again/ Conjure the Jester again" – here we go, you know? That's it. That's what we do onstage: I'm the court jester and the shaman all wrapped up in one, you know?

Who gets his outfits from the Navy store next door, right before the gig?
Yeah. That's right, yeah, yeah, yeah … No, that' right. Oh, no, on the last tour, I actually had stuff, shit made up, you know, it was kind of the steampunk sort of like look and stuff. So who knows what I'm going to be dressed up in if we go on tour again.

So, is there still sex, drugs and rock n' roll with IRON MAIDEN or is it more golf, and the occasional beer?
Well, I don't do golf, you know.

But your drummer does?
Our drummer does, yeah. But he's not unusual in that. You know, there are plenty of like heroin addicts who like golf. In fact I think golf is maybe worse. But yeah, I mean, I've tried golf, I have tried, but it just doesn't agree with me. So, yeah, there's a bit of golf going on, I mean – most of the time, actually, to be honest with you, when it's on the road, it's very seldom that we do more than go out and have a few beers. Because we're usually too knackered. We're usually too tired. You know, because it takes a while for the old body to recover. And when we're still doing three and a half, four shows a week. And reasonable punishing schedule, cause we don't just wander around the stage, we throw ourselves around a bit.

Have you ever counted the miles you run on stage?
No, somebody should put one of those wristwatches on me that calculate how many watts you're generating or whatever it is, you know.

I heard you are still fencing every once in a while. Like against Bartosz Piasecki, the Norwegian Olympic silver medalist. How did that go down?
Oh, yeah! I mean, no, I wasn't in shape at all. I mean, they just stuck me up – he was number two in the world or something, I think, yeah, yeah. I got a couple of points on him. (laughs) He is about two and a half meters tall, you know, so (laughs) …

He made you a great compliment though.
What'd he say? (laughs)

Photo: John McMurtrie

He said you are small, but quick, and that's like your strength. You must have given him a hard time.
(laughs)

I mean, you scored quite a few points in the beginning …
Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I mean, I'm not a pushover. You know, I mean I used to be OK, you know. So you don't forget, you just get rusty. I mean, it's like poor old Federer against Djokovic, and Djokovic didn't so much, didn't really … Djokovic won it, but Federer actually lost it. If you look at the number of unforced errors, Federer lost it more than Djokovic won it. And I think it's just, you know, Federer, his age – it's that tiny margin that, at that level, makes the difference between winning and losing. So, if he's just that little bit more tired, all those unforced errors, where he just clipped the net, and it didn't quite make that return, you know, in the end they make the difference.

So, any regrets you didn't join the British Olympic team?
Honestly: not really. Because first of all: The British Olympic team weren't very good. (laughs) You know. So, I mean, they were very good because they were the best that we had in England, but on the world stage? They weren't that good. So, yeah, I could've joined the British Olympic team, and then I would have gone out in the first or second round of the Olympics like all the other guys in the team. So, you could've got the jacket and everything else. I was average. If you compare it to tennis – in the world rankings of fencing – I didn't exist. In the national rankings, yeah, great. But you're in the national rankings in a second or in a B list country. Not bad for a guy that does it part time, and sings in a rock n' roll band, but in truth: Let's not go crazy here.

Will you ever finish your rock opera on Paganini?
Well, you know what? The script is still sitting there, so if somebody wants to come along with a couple million bucks, yeah! (laughs) You know, I'm not holding my breath.

With Paganini being sort of an ancient Ritchie Blackmore?
Well, Ritchie, I think Ritchie stole lots of stuff from Paganini, you know, so … (chuckles) The Man in Black, the original.

So, if you were Prime Minister of the UK what would you change? Where would you start?
If I was David Cameron?

For example.
Yeah, I'd grow a pair of balls. (off mic) I'd grow a pair of balls as big as Angela Merkel's. (laughs)

I thought you'd say something like joining Schengen or leaving the EU …
Yeah. Well, I just wish they'd all tell the truth …

Well, that's not going to happen. Thank you so much! *(ma)*

VINYL (AND OTHER) RARITIES FOR COLLECTORS

The trade in rare and valuable IRON MAIDEN vinyl flourishes incessantly, with record prices constantly being reached on internet platforms with no end in sight. The band's management has sought to put an end to the illegal sale of live bootlegs, though several members of IRON MAIDEN have been on record in recent years as saying that they have nothing against fans taping shows – if it's for their own enjoyment. Nevertheless, the explosion of demand for rare recordings of any kind means that IRON MAIDEN today is probably the world's most traded band, even surpassing LED ZEPPELIN, this true especially as far as limited pressings and other oddities are concerned.

The sale of live recordings at record fairs and underground via online fan sites is hardly or not at all affected by the band management's monitoring strategy, however. While LED ZEPPELIN was considered to be the most bootlegged rock band in history until a few years ago, IRON MAIDEN has challenged them for this title in recent years and has likely surpassed them by now. Hardly a month goes by without a new, limited edition live bootleg record of the Men of Iron being made available. Those who want a good overview should definitely consult the relevant specialist literature. The somewhat older "Iron Maiden – Live Collectibles" by Marco Gamba and Nicola Visintini (Moving Sound Books, 1997) and above all the famous work of reference "The Amazing Colourful Iron Maiden Bootleg Record Discography" by Christian Sorkalla (self-published, 2013) are indispensable guides through the jungle of sonic larceny, though of course many more bootlegs have surfaced since those books were written. But officially released IRON MAIDEN rarities are also very popular and equally sought after – both by seasoned collectors and newcomers with bulging wallets ...

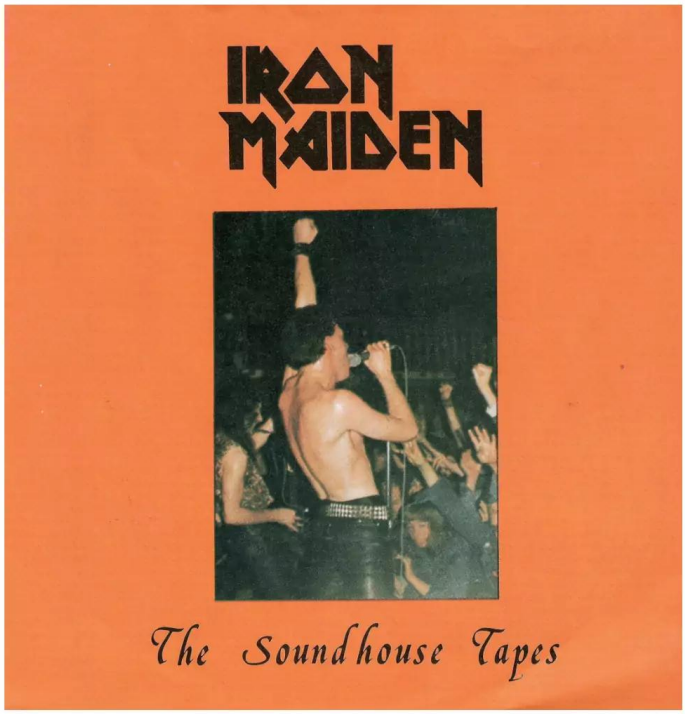


Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

"THE SOUNDHOUSE TAPES"

The Holy Grail

The oldest and most sought after of all IRON MAIDEN rarities is without question the very first, self-financed 7" single "The Soundhouse Tapes", the Holy Grail for all serious IRON MAIDEN collectors. The songs "Prowler", "Invasion", "Iron Maiden" and "Strange World" were originally recorded on 30 and 31 December 1978 at Spaceward Studios, Cambridge (the latter song ultimately didn't make it onto the record). On 9 November 1979, the single was released on the band's own Rock Hard Records label with a circulation of just 5,000 copies. 3,000 of them were sold by mail order in just the first week without the record even reaching retailers. Keith Wilfort, the band's fan club manager from their earliest days through to the early 1990's, sold the 7" single via the mail order from IRON MAIDEN and remembers as follows: "Yes, I sent the single myself. I lived at my mother's house on Beaconsfield Road, a few miles west of East Ham, in Canning Town. That was a barely 15-minute walk to the legendary Bridge House. My mum ran the mail order and I opened, sorted and answered the fan mail. I'm still proud today that we answered all of the letters and sent out all of the merch on time. I know Rod Smallwood and the band were impressed with the way we got it all together. I think that was ultimately the reason why he later offered me a permanent position."

Music chains HMV and Virgin consequently ordered a combined total of 20,000 copies of the single between them from Smallwood but were turned away empty handed. The band decided to limit the

Photo: © Archive I.P. Verlag

release to the first edition of 5,000 copies as a small thank you to their already extremely loyal fan base. It is precisely this limitation that makes an original copy of the single so valuable today. With countless counterfeits floating around, a copy of "The Soundhouse Tapes" is only authentic if the sleeve opens from the top (an obvious sign it is counterfeit is if it opens from the right side), and the correct matrix of numbers can be deciphered on the empty part of the groove (on side A: ROK – 1 – A SA *EG'* LYN 7627 – IT and on side B: ROK – 1 – B LYN 7627 – IT *EG* SA). If the single is accompanied by a fan club merchandise flyer, it is even more valuable. Abstrusely, copies of the single without a cover fetch the highest prices. The explanation for this is that the singles were pressed earlier than the sleeves, which is why the very first customers initially received their copies without a cover with a note stating that they would be delivered as soon as they had been printed. This note in the original today is worth a three-digit amount alone, with "The Soundhouse Tapes" proper fetching well into four digits, depending on its condition.

"SANCTUARY"

Censorship, or Self-censorship?

After Rod Smallwood signed a deal for IRON MAIDEN with EMI and after the considerable success of the "Running Free" single, "Sanctuary", released on 16 May 1980, was the next 7" and 12" single (with "Drifter" live and MONTROSE cover "I've Got The Fire" on the B-side). At the time of the debut album, the band was still desperate to attract attention, and, not for the last time, an IRON MAIDEN cover artwork would prove to be controversial. As artist Derek Riggs recalls: "It was originally my idea to immortalise Margaret Thatcher on the cover. Rod quickly took the wind out of my sails and informed me that the band did not want to be associated with Margaret Thatcher in any way. I accepted that. But in the lyrics to "Sanctuary" it literally says: 'I've never killed a woman before but I know how it feels.' In terms of content, of course, that's nonsense, but I took that as the starting point for my original cover idea. By the time I was about halfway through the drawing, Rod must have changed his mind. Suddenly it should be Thatcher. So I integrated her face into the design. I always want to tell a little story with my covers. That's just my approach. So the fans always have something to unravel."

Smallwood's change of heart must have had to do with the idea to initiate a minor scandal for the motif of the "Sanctuary" single. On 10 May 1980, British music magazine "Sounds" read as follows: "The original cover of the 'Sanctuary' single was supposed to show a drawing of Maggie Thatcher tearing up an IRON MAIDEN poster and being killed by band mascot Eddie for it. Due to recent incidents, the band has concerns about the representation on the record sleeve. Lord Home was recently assaulted by skinheads at Piccadilly Circus underground station. Lord Chalfont also got a black eye from close-cropped youngsters on Kings Road. IRON MAIDEN deeply condemns these acts of violence. In order not to encourage further escalation, the face of Margaret Thatcher will be made unrecognizable with a black bar over the eyes. The 'Sanctuary' single will be delivered to shops in England in this censored version."

At the end of the day, though, it was more about self-censorship than censorship, as Derek Riggs confirms: "The single with Margaret Thatcher on the cover was by no means censored. IRON MAIDEN themselves put the black bar over Thatcher's eyes in order to get more press." Strangely, it's easier to find copies of the single today without the bar over Maggie's eyes than the supposedly 'censored' edition. Both editions are not among the top IRON MAIDEN rarities and are still available at relatively moderate prices.

"TWILIGHT ZONE"

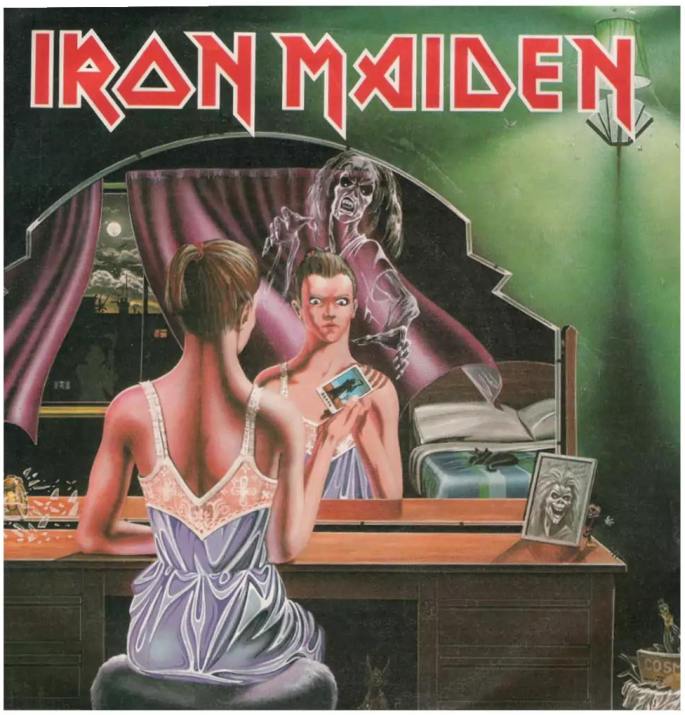
A Mis-pressing in the Twilight of History

There are numerous IRON MAIDEN picture discs (practically one for almost every variation of Eddie) as well as shaped picture discs and other special pressings. A segment that has been neglected (at least

when compared to bands like VENOM) is coloured vinyl. The "Twilight Zone" single should be of the greatest interest here by far. The 7" was released on 2 March 1981 (catalogue number EMI 5145) with Paul Di'Anno on vocals, and the track stands out for not being on the original LP version of "Killers". "Twilight Zone" was released on black vinyl by default, but far fewer copies were made available on

clear and red vinyl by mistake. As is well-known, various outputs are produced at the presser's by adding coloured granulate. It can sometimes happen that so-called transitional colours emerge in the actual pressing process that were not intended. That was obviously the case with the production of the "Twilight Zone" single, far before press-

ing coloured vinyl on purpose became a commercial imperative. In addition, there are a handful of copies on brown vinyl (albeit with a red cast), so-called "false pressings". Such hyper-rarities usually do not even appear on the open market. A specimen exchanged hands a few years ago via an internal network of IRON MAIDEN collectors for the proud sum of exactly €666 ...



"MAIDEN JAPAN"

Made in Venezuela – The Great Mystery

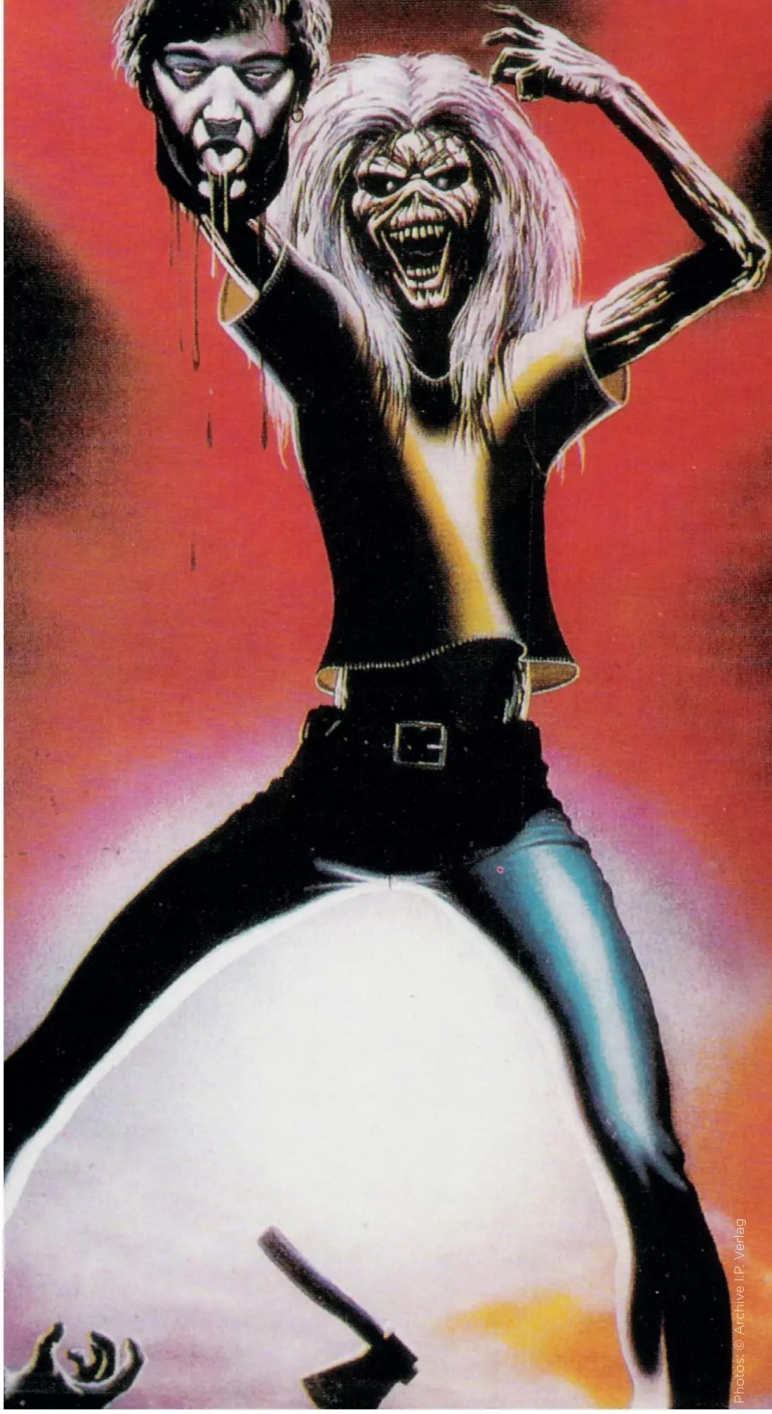
The release of the "Maiden Japan" EP with an alternative front cover in Venezuela remains a big mystery. Artist Derek Riggs had originally drawn a motif for the live EP showing Eddie holding the severed head of Paul Di'Anno. The release of the record, containing live versions of "Running Free", "Remember Tomorrow", "Killers" and "Innocent Exile", was originally planned for 14 September 1981. But nobody could have foreseen that Di'Anno would be asked to leave the band following IRON MAIDEN's performance in Copenhagen on 10 September 1981. Naturally, under such circumstances, the original cover artwork would have seemed like the band had premeditated the axing of their ex-singer and would have seemed like another slap in the face, so manager Rod Smallwood immediately picked up the phone and condemned Derek Riggs to another long night shift.

In the revised and final version of the cover for "Maiden Japan", Eddie ultimately wields a samurai sword, and this was the version that was released worldwide, but with one exception: Venezuela. How it came to be that the record would be released there with the original artwork via EMI Venezuela remains a big mystery. Close confidants of the band unanimously state that both Steve Harris and Rod Smallwood still swear hand on heart that there was only one copy of the original cover, which was locked away in the IRON MAIDEN office at all times. In addition, there is another unexplained detail: the original Venezuelan pressing (there are various forgeries) contains the imprint "(P) 1987". That means that in Venezuela, "Maiden Japan" with the original Riggs cover was obviously not released in 1981, but only in 1987. Which makes the matter seem perhaps a little less mysterious.

Riggs explains his view of the creation of the original cover: "I was commissioned to draw the cover for a live disc that was recorded in Japan. So my original design showed Eddie surrounded by a cloud of dry ice mist. Eddie held Paul Di'Anno's head in his hand. At that time, IRON MAIDEN were already looking for a new singer behind his back. Of course, I didn't know that, otherwise I wouldn't have decided on this motif at all. It was a terrible coincidence. If Paul had seen my original artwork back then, trouble would have been inevitable. As I heard the story, the original covers had already been delivered and they all had to be withdrawn. But I don't know the exact details."

Since Venezuela did not have a particularly good network of record stores (still an understatement today), most of the original copies of "Maiden Japan" turned up there on flea markets – and the degree of their preservation was accordingly poor. Prices for a new copy of the Venezuelan edition of "Maiden Japan" can run up to well over €500. A good fifteen years ago, resourceful Brazilian bootleggers tried to capitalise on the massive demand for the "Maiden Japan" version with the original sleeve in a rather unscrupulous way. Clearly, enough authentic vinyl copies of the Brazilian pressing (which incidentally includes "Wrathchild" as an additional fifth song) were collecting dust in second-hand stores there. For this purpose, the perpetrators of the scam made a cover with the original drawing and issued the whole thing as an official Brazilian EMI pressing (from 1981). The European collector scene was sent into a frenzy of excitement – the first copies to appear on the market reached four-digit prices. However, disillusionment quickly set in, especially as the black border on the front cover made it clear that it had to be a counterfeit. But even the acquisition of this bootleg, should one obtain it, requires a three-digit amount.

Staying with "Maiden Japan" for a moment: some time ago, the entire concert performed on 23 May 1981 at the Kosei Nenkin Hall in Nagoya was released under the title "Maiden Japan Live – Complete Performance!" As a bootleg, it is crystal clear in its sound quality (the source is obviously a soundboard recording). The in total 20 tracks show Paul Di'Anno in top form, driven by an audience so enthusiastic that IRON MAIDEN don't want to leave the stage, ending up playing



Photos: © Archive I.P. Verlag

their early hit single "Running Free" twice (!). A historical performance, which will hopefully be released officially one day.

"EDDIE'S ARCHIVES"

And Other Boxed Bonanzas

Box sets have always been very special (and very expensive) for collectors, and IRON MAIDEN is no exception here. They are mostly (more or less strictly) limited, expensive to manufacture, and therefore anything but inexpensive to purchase. In most cases, the relatively low distribution ensures a significant increase in value just a few years after release. Taking a detour from vinyl for a moment, this applies, for example, to the excellent "Eddie's Archives" released in November 2002. It featured an embossed metal casket featuring Eddie's face and containing three double CD's – "BBC Archives", "Beast Over Hammersmith" (the complete recording of the legendary '82 show, previously unavailable), and "Best Of The 'B' Sides". It includes an IRON MAIDEN family tree parchment scroll that doubles as a certificate for the box, all rolled in a unique Eddie pewter ring. The collection is rounded off with a unique Eddie crystal shot glass from Alchemy. Originally released only in the UK as a limited edition of 25,000 copies with the family tree numbered, fans worldwide were devastated when it sold out almost immediately. The band rectified the situation by commissioning a second edition, though released with a different colour inlay on the tray, which was changed from blue to red, and an unnumbered family tree so as to preserve the value of the original. "'Eddie's Archive' was released for the real collector," Steve Harris explained. "We always try hard to keep the quality there for people. We would make a hell of a lot more money if we didn't package a release looking like that, but we do it because we're proud of the IRON MAIDEN legacy and want to treat the fans with respect." A copy of the first edition today sells upward of €450, while the second edition sells for about €150 and up.

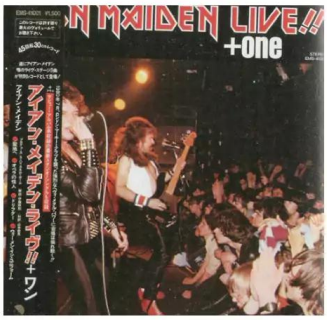
But IRON MAIDEN had issued a previous box set in 1996, the nifty and now extremely rare 4LP box set "Best Of The Beast" (it was also released as a less spectacular, but also

quite rare double CD). It is 'only' a compilation of Maiden evergreens, but includes "Strange World", the fourth song of the legendary "Soundhouse Tapes" sessions that was believed to have been lost. For most fans, that was enough of an incentive. The accompanying 46-page hardcover book is also a real gem. Unfortunately, the family tree contained within has some factual errors which were rectified on "Eddie's Archive". Depending on how well it has been preserved, "Best Of The Beast" should be estimated as being worth between €300 and €500 today.

The mother of "Best Of The Beast" is "The First Ten Years", from 1990. This is a collection of the first twenty IRON MAIDEN singles presented as double 12-inch records, each EP containing two of the singles at a time chronologically accompanied by unique and hilarious commentary at the end from drummer Nicko McBrain, an absolute highlight! Although these EP's could be purchased separately in stores, only those who had all ten EP's with corresponding coupons could order the box to house them. Since the package was only available in this form in the UK, the value of the complete set has risen sharply over time and is currently likely to sell at €500 and above.

But a little earlier than its British counterparts, EMI Greece produced "Maiden Mania", a box set that is at least as sought after today as when it was released. It contains five maxi singles spanning from 1980 to 1987: "Women In Uniform", "Maiden Japan", "Aces High", "Run To The Hills" (live), and "Wasted Years", on blue vinyl. The cover is a collage of the corresponding Eddies from that era. The design of the set is a little spartan, with the covers of the singles in medium pixilation – but the small amount of copies produced meant that demand for the set, which is officially only available in Greece, quickly exceeded the supply.

Staying in Hellas for a moment, there is a second Greek licensed pressing, albeit not an elaborate box set, which has always raised the heartbeats of IRON MAIDEN collectors. The mini-LP "Live!! + One" featuring the songs "Sanctuary", "Phantom Of The Opera", "Drifter", and "Women In Uniform" was released in 1980 (the first three live songs were recorded at London's Marquee Club). But it was released in Greece as a full LP in 1984, with five tracks added. The bonus live tracks were all drawn from UK single B-sides ("Innocent Exile", "Prowler", "Running Free", "Remember Tomorrow" and "I've Got The Fire"). There is a quite well-made forgery of the Greek edition of "Live!! + One" which can be spotted by the fact that while all song titles are printed in English on the back cover of the original pressing, the counterfeit lists the song titles in Greek!



Ultimately, however, it is an unauthorised numbered box set, with a ridiculously low 100 copies produced, that dwarfs all official releases in this area, both in terms of packaging and content. "The Milano Tapes" includes six LP's, a DVD, an exclusive T-shirt, four posters, and three laminated tour passes. As the name suggests, musically it encompasses the "collected works" of Maiden's performances in Milan up until 1984 – specifically, the 1980's appearance as the opening act for KISS, two gigs from the 1981 "Killers", plus the "World Slavery Tour" performance from 1984. Needless to say, one practically has to put down an amount for the "Milano Tapes" box set that 'normal' people would spend on a small used car.

THE 1990'S

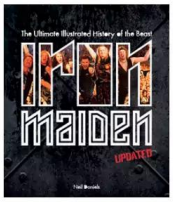
Price Explosion, Artificial Shortages

Vinyl versions of IRON MAIDEN albums from especially the early 1990's are very sought after by collectors. The reason is easy to identify: it was the time when the music industry wanted to let vinyl die out in favour of the more profitable compact disc. During this time, IRON MAIDEN vinyl was only sold in stores that even still carried vinyl and then with a circulation of a few thousand copies. The presentation was also relatively austere compared to today's vinyl pressings, and the sound was often anything but ideal. As a result of this deliberately artificial shortage, there is hardly an IRON MAIDEN album from the 1990's that is not traded for three-digit sums. Collectors are particularly interested in the following albums: "A Real Live One" (1993), "A Real Dead One" (1993), "Live At Donington" (1993), "The X Factor" (1995) "Best Of The Beast "(1996)," Virtual XI "(1998) and even" Brave New World "(2000), although at least the re-releases of the studio albums from the 1990's have helped ease the price situation in recent years.

In conclusion, we, the fans, pray that, sooner or later, IRON MAIDEN will unleash their entire archive to us. As far as unreleased studio recordings, demo tracks, and last but not least, live recordings are concerned, not too much material has been released officially to date. By contrast, compare to DEEP PURPLE, who continuously release live recordings on vinyl with unbelievable consistency and fantastic sound quality since the early 1990's. According to well-informed sources, Steve Harris is said to own a gargantuan private archive of IRON MAIDEN rarities. Is it only a matter of time before he decides to share his true riches with the fans? *(mm)*

Photo: John McMurtrie

LITERATURE



IRON MAIDEN – UPDATED EDITION

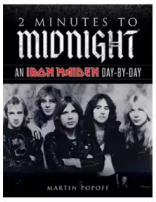
Neil Daniels
Voyager Press
240 pages

Published under its original title "The Ultimate Unauthorized History of the Beast" it may have been a bit cumbersome, but it is well-known that caution is the mother of safety. After all, who would want a lawsuit from Rod Smallwood? Due to the splendid presentation, complete with a gimmick cover for the hardcover edition, consistently high-quality four-colour process printing and hundreds of rare images (record covers, live shots, T-shirts, promo photos, tour passes, concert posters and other memorabilia), the uninitiated reader might be excused for pondering whether this biography was not actually commissioned by the band themselves. However, it was not – hence the addition of the "unauthorized" tag. The main text, a detailed biography by Neil Daniels, lags a little behind the graphic design, however. Daniels retells the IRON MAIDEN story solidly and without major errors, but is unfortunately not able to develop more in-depth insight or raise further questions. Regrettably, it doesn't exactly play in his favour that he is forced to rely on second-hand quotes due to his inability to collect first-hand quotes himself. On the other hand, the assembly of exemplary setlists from respective live tours is extremely well done. The tour dates from 1976 are also meticulously researched. A relatively detailed discography is to be found at the end of the 240 pages, and an index ensures that one can find one's way around the book. The original was reprinted in 2016 as "Iron Maiden – Updated".

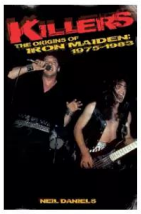
TWO MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT – AN IRON MAIDEN DAY-BY-DAY

Martin Popoff
Backbeat Books
246 pages

Rock connoisseurs will be familiar with the name Martin Popoff. Including the present



title, the native Canadian has well over 50 rock books to his name. "Two Minutes To Midnight" can be considered a companion piece to Neil Daniels's "The Ultimate Unauthorized History of the Beast". Both titles are presented in a similarly brilliant way: complete with hardcover and countless images in the form of concert tickets, posters, rare vinyl, magazines, and original press releases. In addition, there is a whole series of exclusive live photos (for example, fantastic shots from the 1981 "Killers" tour of Popoff's hometown Toronto). In terms of text, the author is entertaining as usual on the one hand, and thankfully also 100% factual on the other. The text follows the band's chronology strictly, which means the reader can quickly find out when, for example, Paul Di'Anno's very last appearance with IRON MAIDEN took place (ergo 10 September 1981, in Copenhagen). Popoff conducted more than 20 (!) interviews with the most varied of former and current band members, all of which are printed in extracts throughout the book. Particularly striking is how contradictory some of Paul Di'Anno's statements are. The interviews with manager Rod Smallwood should also be regarded as a real rarity, as the infamous manager otherwise likes to remain in the shadows. Above all, the extensive pool of original quotes makes Popoff's "day-by-day" chronicle absolutely indispensable.



KILLERS – THE ORIGINS OF IRON MAIDEN 1975-1983

Neil Daniels
Soundcheck Books
236 pages

Together with Joel McIver, Neil Daniels is one of the most prolific writers of rock literature in the UK. "Killers – The Origins of Iron Maiden 1975-1983" (with a very nice, exclusive live photo of Paul Di'Anno and Steve Harris on the cover) is his second work on IRON MAIDEN. Daniels concentrates on the early days of the band, where it is certainly worth discussing whether "Piece Of Mind" or even "The Number Of The Beast" in the narrower sense can still be counted as being in the early phase of the band. The period before the first album, when musicians were in and out of the band as often as Steve Harris changes underwear, is unquestionably very interesting. The book suffers a little from the fact that only a few of the original witnesses to the era wanted to comment officially (including Dennis Stratton and original head of the IRON MAIDEN fan club, Keith Wilfort). Nevertheless, Maiden maniacs learn a few amazing details across the 236 pages (and which only feature a small series of photos): for example, rare demo recordings of "Run To The Hills" and "Hallowed Be Thy Name" with Paul Di'Anno on vocals allegedly exist (though this rumour has been shot down in the meanwhile – Di'Anno stated in an interview that he had sung said pieces in rehearsal, but that no such recordings exist). An absolute highlight of the book is the detailed listing of all live dates from 1976 (!) to 1983 including the naming of all of Maiden's support bands.

OUTSIDE IRON MAIDEN

Erwin Lucas
Maiden Holland
652 pages

Erwin Lucas is meticulous about absolutely everything. Rumours and half-truths are swept aside, as the Dutchman concentrates on getting to the heart of matters straight away. So it comes as no surprise that his first book, "Outside Iron Maiden", is such a heavyweight. This is meant in the truest sense of the word as the hardcover edition weighs just under two kilos. The title is well chosen, because across the 652 pages the discography of all 25 band members since the founding of the band in 1976 before, after, and in parallel to their work in IRON MAIDEN is presented pretty much seamlessly. This makes the book an ideal addition

to the many accounts which are limited to the context of IRON MAIDEN itself. Erwin Lucas throws up hypotheticals here and there in the annotations that will not meet with approval from everyone. For example, he claims that the song "Sanctuary" was originally written by the band SNATCH, and that guitarist Bob Sawyer officially gave up the rights to the song to IRON MAIDEN. These are not so much assertions pulled out of thin air, but rather original quotes uttered by respective protagonists in direct conversation with Lucas. The author without question did his homework. Some unpublished photos from the private archives of musicians, as well as numerous cover images, add value to the book. The layout is a bit conservative, but "Outside Iron Maiden" deserves an absolute place of honour in any fan's IRON MAIDEN library.

RUNNING FREE – THE OFFICIAL STORY OF IRON MAIDEN

Garry Bushell
Zomba Books
142 pages

"Running Free" was originally published by Zomba Books in 1984 and is the very first authorised biography of IRON MAIDEN. Collectors today pay substantial amounts for one of the three original editions (each with a different cover artwork). Although the book is anything but up to date from today's perspective, it should be viewed as an important document and as a snapshot of the time in which it was written. This is not least due to Garry Bushell's original writing style, and he deliberately refrained from writing a band biography in the conventional sense. Bushell was the star writer of the British magazine "Sounds", is considered the founder of the Oi! Movement, and has accompanied IRON MAIDEN's journey since the very early 1980's. He benefits from being very close to the band, especially Steve Harris and Paul Di'Anno. "Running Free" perfectly captures the rough charm of the London East End and the boundless optimism of IRON MAIDEN's early days. Due to the partial use of Cockney slang, some passages can be a little difficult to understand for non-native speakers. "Running Free" is Steve Harris's professed favourite IRON MAIDEN book, and he has stated his belief that it would be impossible to translate its 142 pages into another language. Another big plus of "Running Free" is the outstanding photographic material from Ross Halfin. There are also some very rare private disclosures, including those of singer Dennis Wilcock, Paul Di'Anno's direct predecessor.

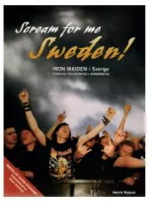
RUN TO THE HILLS

Mick Wall
Sanctuary
394 pages

"Run To The Hills", written by the renowned and prolific rock journalist Mick Wall, is the standard work when it comes to authorised IRON MAIDEN literature. There is therefore no getting around the 394 pages of "Run To The Hills" for Maiden researchers either way. The book was originally published in 1998 and has since been updated several times (with different cover artwork and additional content). In 2005, a licensed edition for the German-speaking regions saw the light of day and quickly became a bestseller. "Run To The Hills" (admittedly not a particularly original title) is officially authorised by IRON MAIDEN's management, which has its advantages and disadvantages. Wall had free access to all current (and former) members of the band and presents a colourful palette of interesting citations. Of course, at the end of the day what one reads in the book corresponds to the official IRON MAIDEN line. For example, the eternally heated discussion between inveterate Maideheads about how many guitarists actually play on the legendary "Soundhouse Tapes" EP is completely swept under the carpet. Furthermore, a few annoying factual errors creep into Wall's work, such as misspelling the name of guitarist Terry Wapram, who was in the band between September 1977 and February 1978, as Terry Wrapram. Sadly, the relatively manageable proportion of photos leaves a bit to be desired in terms of quality. Despite these minor flaws, "Run To The Hills" is absolutely unrivalled as a research source.

SCREAM FOR ME SWEDEN – IRON MAIDEN I SVERIGE

Henrik Nyquist
Zoor Förlag
206 pages
Sweden was one of the first European countries to open its heart to IRON MAIDEN, and chart positions for almost all IRON MAIDEN albums are by far the best by international comparison. Fan and journalist Henrik Nyquist addresses this extraordinary love



affair in his 2004 book "Scream For Me Sweden – Iron Maiden I Sverige". Even if one is not able to speak the Swedish language, which probably applies to the majority of readers, it deserves to be stocked in any IRON MAIDEN library. This is primarily due to the outstanding graphic design and the large number of previously unpublished images and documents. Among other things, there are exclusive snapshots from Maiden's first tour through Sweden as the opening act for KISS. A full page of photos is devoted to the appearance in Gothenburg at the Olympen on 9 September 1981 on the "Killers" tour, the penultimate date featuring Paul Di'Anno as frontman. A certain Mikael Almse had smuggled an instant camera into the hall – the photos taken from the front row alone are worth the costly search for the hardcover gem, which has long since been out of print. Across 206 pages, Nyquist presents himself as a passionate collector and extremely conscientious archivist. Nothing escapes him, from the English-language press release announcing Dennis Stratton's exit in November 1980 to the original setlist from the Stockholm Globen on the 1992 "Fear Of The Dark" tour.

IRON MAIDEN – ON BOARD FLIGHT 666

John McMurtrie
Orion Publishing
256 pages

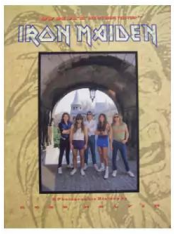
A few years before IRON MAIDEN set out to begin their unstoppable ascent to the pantheon of metal gods, their then much better-known compatriots from LED ZEPPELIN already had a passenger jet to call their own. "The Starship" represented like no other aircraft the rock megalomania of the 1970's and would be used not only by the band members, but also leased by them to other greats in the music business such as ELTON JOHN, ALICE COOPER, THE ROLLING STONES and THE ALLMAN BROTHERS (incidentally, the latter found the lovely greeting "Welcome Allman Brothers" neatly written in lines of cocaine on the bar upon boarding the Boeing 720). Flight captain Bruce Dickinson would hardly have tolerated

such drug escapades on board "Ed Force One", a Boeing 757, while transporting the entourage of the "Somewhere Back In Time World Tour" around the world in 2008-09, however. As part of an overall multimedia package, fans were able to follow the event entitled "Iron Maiden: Flight 666" not only in the form of a documentary and concert film, but also as a live album on CD and vinyl, as well as in this book form. And woe to those who have waited too long to buy the latter, because copies in mint condition are now available only at steep collector's prices. The quality of the tour extravaganza captured by official band photographer John McMurtrie and the background information that is interspersed definitely justify the investment, however.

IRON MAIDEN ALBUM BY ALBUM

Martin Popoff
Voyageur Press
266 pages

As the title indicates, veteran rock writer Martin Popoff takes the reader on a journey through each IRON MAIDEN album up to and including "The Book Of Souls". The gimmick here is that he does so by interviewing a series of musicians and rock journalists (a different mixture of two or three for each album) so the analyses take on a conversational quality. Contributors include Blaze Bayley, Marty Friedman, Matt Heafy, Chris Jericho, Sean Kelly, Mike Portnoy, Brian Slagel, Nita Strauss, and Ahmet Zappa, among others. The book is useful for insights and details that may not be obvious to non-musicians, and broadly covers the albums well, although it suffers from a focus on subjective preferences rather than sustained objective analysis of the songs or lyrics (a book of which has yet to be written). Like its sister companion volume "2 Minutes To Midnight", the book features a generous helping of rare pictures, concert tickets and posters, single covers, magazine covers, and rare vinyl. While the views of the musicians and Maiden fans are interesting, one cannot help but notice the book's lack of substantial analyses from Popoff himself. Fair enough however, he does introduce each album very adequately. Nevertheless, the book is a welcome addition to any IRON MAIDEN fan's library of Maiden research, and is complemented by numerous rare photos.



WHAT ARE WE DOING THIS FOR? IRON MAIDEN: A PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY

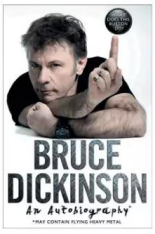
Ross Halfin
Zomba Books
128 pages

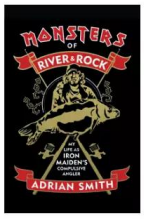
This charming book of photographs of IRON MAIDEN from veteran rock photographer Ross Halfin is unfortunately out of print but belongs in every Maiden head's collection. Consisting of by now relatively rare photos of the band taken between 1979 and 1987, the book is heavy on the "Somewhere In Time" era and tour, thus serving as a welcome documentation of that momentous tour given the lack of other official releases to commemorate it. The "Powerslave" and "Piece Of Mind" eras are also well documented, as Halfin, who had met the band in 1979, ascended to become the band's official photographer. IRON MAIDEN are seen in most conceivable band situations, whether via live shots, backstage shots, shooting the "Stranger In A Strange Land" video, or pictured in various exotic locations such as Japan and Nassau in the Bahamas, where the aforementioned albums were recorded. The band for their part had no problem hamming it up in front of the camera, gleefully indulging in joking and playful behaviour and pulling silly faces. Where merited pictures are accompanied by tongue in cheek commentary from Halfin, while legendary rock journalist Mick Wall provides an introduction. Halfin also published "Iron Maiden: A Photo History" in 2006 with pictures up to and including the "Dance Of Death" era, but this gem is worth having perhaps even a bit more so, catching the band, well, somewhere in time, as it were. It can still be obtained second hand without having to pay an exorbitant price for it.

WHAT DOES THIS BUTTON DO? – AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Bruce Dickinson
HarperCollins
384 pages

Anyone who engages with the oeuvre of IRON MAIDEN even superficially knows of the band's proclivity for literary works from the song titles alone. So it's not actually surprising that frontman Bruce Dickinson joined the guild of writers himself a long time ago. His two satirical novels "Adventures of Lord Iffy Boatrace" and "The Missionary Position – The Further Advances of Lord Iffy Boatrace" were published in 1990 and 1992 respectively, but everyone was understandably waiting mainly for the singer's autobiography, the publication of which could only be a matter of time. In autumn 2017, that time had finally come. In contrast to many other stars in the music business, the good Mr. Dickinson did not need a ghost writer for "What Does This Button Do?", but – as befits one of the world's last Renaissance men – wrote the book entirely himself (by hand). And that brings us to the key of the book, because its focus is an chronological overview of the many activities to which he has devoted himself over the years, inevitably including the career of IRON MAIDEN and closing with Dickinson's victorious struggle over tongue cancer, to the relief of literally millions of fans. The more than 400 pages fly by while reading and consolidate the image of an extremely intelligent, determined, and personable artist even further.





MONSTERS OF RIVER & ROCK: MY LIFE AS IRON MAIDEN'S COMPULSIVE ANGLER

Adrian Smith
Virgin Books
304 pages

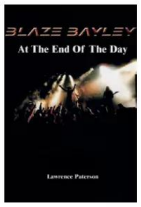
This utterly delightful oddity of a book by IRON MAIDEN guitarist Adrian Smith published in 2020 is a first in the history of heavy metal. In a nutshell, a book by an A-league rock star simply about the joys of going fishing. Written across two years in hotels or on planes and dedicated to his father, who instilled in Smith his love of the pastime, "Monsters Of River & Rock" is a beautifully written account which details his lifetime of angling all over the world while on tour with the band. Maiden-related stories crop up intermittently only to tie the tales of angling together, with the book consisting mainly of Smith's endeavours catching fish and his love of nature, travel, and the unexpected. As such, it should not be considered an autobiography, though the hobby did help Smith cope with social anxiety earlier in his life and

to give up the unhealthy sides of the rock n' roll lifestyle, providing reprieve as opposed to alcohol-fuelled escape during the band's gruelling tours. While fans will not find sordid tales of debauchery on the road or an account of Smith's life in or outside of IRON MAIDEN, therefore, they should not be dissuaded from reading this book, for what they will find is Smith's view of the world through the pursuit of his passion aside from music. It really must be emphasised that Smith has a real gift for writing (words, that is, his gift for songwriting is of course well-known to posterity), and that the book is consequently a joy to read – something akin to sitting with Smith around the campfire, and what could be better than that?

THE BEAST

Paul Di'Anno
John Blake
352 pages

It wasn't exactly anticipated when Paul Di'Anno, the singer on the legendary first two IRON MAIDEN albums, published his memoir with the help of Dale Webb in 2002. "The Beast" (Di'Anno's self-chosen sobriquet) is without question a spectacular read. Paul Andrews, also known as Paul Di'Anno, a typical child of London's East End, tells less the story of himself and certainly not that of the band which originally brought him into the public spotlight. Rather, Di'Anno recounts anecdote after anecdote from the road and his various travels, mostly of the shocking kind: sex, shootings, drug excesses, prison, violence, fantasies of murder and suicide – hardly any cliché is left out. Of course, just as with "The Heroin Diaries" by MÖTLEY CRÜE bassist Nikki Sixx, the objective reader will ask the question here and there as to how fact and fiction relate to one another in "The Beast". A large part of the press jumped to conclusions when the biography was published (and which is still only available in the original English version). Anyone close to Di'Anno personally will know, however, that the volatile but affable East End lad, who claims to have Italian ancestry, is certainly not averse to excess. Not only he himself, but many of his closest friends credibly affirm that it is a small miracle that Di'Anno is still among us. And it is precisely this feeling that "The Beast" expresses emphatically. In this case, whether or not the stylistic literary device of exaggeration was used (as close friend Steve "Loopy" Newhouse suggests) is of secondary importance: that Di'Anno has done all of the things of which he writes is certainly possible.



BLAZE BAYLEY – AT THE END OF THE DAY

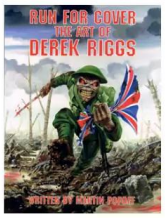
Lawrence Paterson
Self-published
396 pages

One can twist and turn reality in any way one wants but nobody can seriously claim that Blaze Bayley was able to follow in the gargantuan footsteps of Bruce Dickinson during his time in IRON MAIDEN. Nevertheless, in general and in this book, Blaze Bayley never airs dirty laundry about his former bandmates. Instead, he often emphasises in an almost obtrusive manner how fair Steve Harris was to him in particular. Bayley mainly blames the press for his resignation. However, these rudimentary critical statements cannot be counted as a real scolding of the media in the book. "At The End Of The Day" is a cleverly chosen book title – but a rancorous mood does not arise. Lawrence Paterson, a drummer in Bayley's band, authored its 396 pages, so he was certainly close to the singer, whose true emotional life unfortunately remains a little underexposed and unexplored in the book. Instead, especially in the last third, a series of reasonably exciting tour experiences is recounted. Blaze Bayley is a thoroughly sympathetic guy, and it is precisely for this reason that this self-published work should also be received with due respect.

LOOPYWORLD: THE IRON MAIDEN YEARS

Steve "Loopy" Newhouse
IzzyFlynn Publishing
218 pages

Ever wondered what it's like to be on the road with IRON MAIDEN? Ever dreamt of having a pint of lager with Paul Di'Anno? Ever wanted to be transported back to the magic of Maiden's earliest gigs at the Cart & Horses and Ruskin Arms in London's East End? Do you feel you were born ten, twenty, thirty years too late and in a wrong part of the world? Then look no further, this is the book for you. Steve "Loopy" Newhouse was a roadie with IRON MAIDEN from their earliest days, when he accompanied best mate since childhood Di'Anno to the latter's first rehearsals with the band in 1978 and through Maiden's rise from local heroes on the London pub circuit to world heavy metal champions by 1984. Stacked with hitherto unseen photos from Loopy's own personal collection and those of colleagues and friends from the early days, alongside all manner of stage hand and tour memorabilia and a narrative that will put you on the road crew with the lads through all the ups and downs, beers and tears, and laughter and toil of being part of the crucial component without which greatness could not have occurred, this book is a must for any serious IRON MAIDEN fanatic. Lauded by both Di'Anno and Steve Harris as an excellent front row account of the band's early years and featuring a cover drawing from Derek Riggs himself, the extraordinarily personable and warm-hearted Loopy will take you on the ride of a lifetime through the annals of possibly the most crucial period in heavy metal history. Warning: this book contains information and observations not found anywhere else. Unmissable.



RUN FOR COVER – THE ART OF DEREK RIGGS

Martin Popoff
Aardvark Publishing
180 pages

The global success of IRON MAIDEN is without a doubt also attributable to the band's visual art style. Most of know that the brains behind the graphics went by the name of Derek Riggs, whose artworks are almost as legendary today as the IRON MAIDEN albums themselves. The quality of Maiden album covers deteriorated sharply when Riggs and Smallwood fell out and IRON MAIDEN turned to other artists (one needs only to compare the cover of "The Book Of Souls" with "Powerslave"). For this book, Martin Popoff had direct access to the reclusive Riggs, who opened his entire archive to the writer, and so the numerous sketches shown in the book shed light on the meticulous and detail-obsessed work of the exceptional artist. The print quality of the 180 pages in A4 format is excellent and makes "Run For Cover – The Art of Derek Riggs" a real visual feast. Popoff pulls out all the stops with regard to the lyrics as well, unearthing all kinds of small and great secrets. The attentive reader learns, for example, that what is perhaps the most legendary IRON MAIDEN album cover of all time, namely "The Number Of The Beast", was originally planned for the single "Purgatory", and that this truly diabolical Eddie only received well-earned LP honours at short notice. *(mm/gl/ag)*

COMICS

Many a fan with an affinity for video games will still remember the botched "Ed Hunter" shooter with which IRON MAIDEN (unintentionally) caused fear and loathing in 1999. After this misfire, the Men of Iron decided to concentrate on their core skill of music. However, 2016 saw a new foray into the field of video games with "Iron Maiden: Legacy of the Beast". The venture not only received positive feedback, but also inspired both the current world tour and two comic mini-series.

It is actually surprising that it took so long to finally be able to hold comics influenced by IRON MAIDEN in one's hands – after all, there are numerous musical and (thanks to Derek Riggs, artwork magician who monopolised Maiden's cover art for years) optical links in the band's oeuvre that scream out for adaptation to the medium. KISS, for example, showed themselves to be much more enterprising in this regard early on and were already working on the so-called Ninth Art at a time when Steve Harris was still changing band members at the same rate others changed their underwear.

The starting point was the role-playing game "Iron Maiden: Legacy of the Beast" developed by 50CC Games and Roadhouse Interactive, which has been available as a free download (apart from optional in-game purchases) for all Android and iOS mobile phones since July 2016. Not only motifs and characters from the IRON MAIDEN universe are used here, but also music. Next to manager Rod Smallwood, Steve Harris was also personally involved and selected live material that was remixed for the game under his supervision.

For the "Legacy of the Beast World Tour", which kicked off in May 2018, some of the elements of the game were used, but these were even more prominent in the official comic adaptation. This was placed with confidence in the hands of the US publisher responsible for the renowned "Heavy Metal" magazine, and in which greats of the comic art guild such as Jean "Moebius" Giraud, Richard Corben, Milo Manara, and Enki Bilal once found a journalistic home.

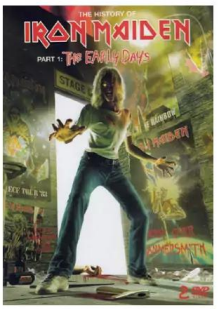
The project hit the ground running with the first of five issues of the miniseries "Iron Maiden: Legacy of the Beast", published in October 2017, in which the readers follow the adventures of Eddie, who is the protagonist just as he is in the game. Since his vocabulary is limited ("Grahh!", "Hrrgh!"), it is up to the seer who accompanies him (The Clairvoyant) to interpret his mission for the readers: in order to save the world from the forces of evil. Eddie himself must fight his way back as the embodiment of the free will of humankind with the fragments of his soul, which the Beast himself deprived him of and distributed to his monstrous subjects – the Wicker Man, the horned god Horus, and the Axis General.

At the end of the story, written by Llexi Leon and Ian Edginton and beautifully drawn by Kevin West, with its clear focus on brute action, it turns out that even the red devil was just the puppet of an even more dangerous opponent that lurked in the shadows. In "Night City", the second volume, which started in 2018 and was plagued by delays until its conclusion in early 2021, a new companion (The Alchemist) assumes the task of guiding our monosyllabic fighter, who has recently arrived in London and also receiving support from a certain Charlotte – just one of the references to songs, motifs and lyrics by IRON MAIDEN that connoisseurs will discover and recognise. In the meantime, both five-part books (each with different cover variations) are also available as an anthology, with the first also being given an "Expanded Edition" with an introduction by Rod Smallwood and a foreword by Bruce Dickinson. *(ag)*

FILMS

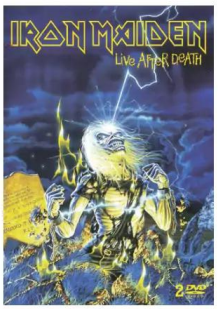
FLIGHT 666 – THE FILM
EMI

Bands having their own tour planes is really nothing new since LED ZEPPELIN's "The Starship", but IRON MAIDEN really took it several steps further when it came to the extravaganza of their "Somewhere Back In Time World Tour". Bruce Dickinson got himself behind the controls of a Boeing 757, lovingly dubbed "Ed Force One", allowing the band to play 23 concerts to over 500,000 people across four continents in just 45 days. "Flight 666" provides a wide-open window into the first leg of the tour and contains a set of 16 songs in just as many different locations. The film is perfectly complemented by the book "Iron Maiden – On Board Flight 666", published by Orion.



THE HISTORY OF IRON MAIDEN, PART 1: THE EARLY DAYS
EMI

Anyone wishing for an up-close and personal cinematic insight into the beginnings of IRON MAIDEN cannot ignore the double DVD "The Early Days". The 90-minute documentary on disc one covers the years from 1975 to 1983, with a veritable phalanx of current and former band members as well as important confidants of the band chatting up close and personal. The fantastic package is completed with four concert recordings from 1980 to 1983 ("Live At The Ruskin", "Live At The Rainbow", "Beast Over Hammersmith", and "Live In Dortmund"), a TV special from 1981 as well as three TV appearances, four promo videos, tour dates, discographies, photo and artwork galleries, and much more.



LIVE AFTER DEATH
EMI

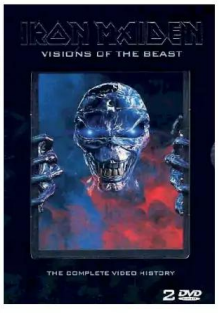
From August 1984 to July 1985, IRON MAIDEN embarked on the monstrous and to date longest tour in the band's history, which also included four gigs at the Long Beach Arena in California. The live recording originally went on sale as a VHS in 1985 and was re-released in the form of a double DVD in 2008, spiced up with a lot of bonus material. The second disc features not only the documentary "The History of Iron Maiden, Part 2: Live After Death", but also the classic deleted VHS "Behind the Iron Curtain" (about the 1984 tour in communist Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, featuring interviews and live footage), "Rock in Rio '85" and "'Ello Texas" (from the San Antonio gig in 1983).

MAIDEN ENGLAND '88
Warner

On 27 and 28 November 1988, IRON MAIDEN played two sold out shows at the NEC in Birmingham as part of the "Seventh Tour Of A Seventh Tour" and released the live recording, which was personally supervised by Steve Harris, on VHS the following year. For the 25th anniversary, fans were given a re-release on CD, a first release on vinyl, and a double DVD. The show also features the previously unreleased three encores ("Run To The Hills", "Running Free", and "Sanctuary"), which were omitted in the original version due to the space constraints of the VHS format. The package also contains "The History of Iron Maiden, Part 3", which covers the years 1986-1988. The 90-minute long documentary "12 Wasted Years" from 1987, and five promo videos are also included.

EN VIVO! – LIVE IN SANTIAGO DE CHILE
EMI

With "The Final Frontier" and a massive new Eddie in their luggage which fans elsewhere would only see later, Bruce Dickinson and Iron crew gave a concert rendezvous on 10 April 2011, at the Estadio Nacional, Santiago in front of 50,000 attendees. The spectacle was captured by 22 HD cameras and a (flying) Octocam by the specialists at Banger Films. The production company was incidentally also responsible for "Flight 666" and the "Metal Evolution" series, both worth a watch. In addition to the 17-song show, the DVD version also includes the 88-minute documentary "Behind The Beast", which provides insight into the elaborate preparations for an IRON MAIDEN gig.



VISIONS OF THE BEAST
EMI

A lot of patience was expected from fans before "Visions of the Beast", an updated version of the 1990 video compilation "The First Ten Years", finally saw the light of day in 2003. All of the IRON MAIDEN video clips that had been released to date could be found across two DVDs (up to Rock in Rio from 2001). The package also contained some previously unavailable videos. The tracks "Aces High", "The Number Of The Beast", "The Wicker Man", "Flight Of Icarus", "Run To The Hills" and "The Trooper" further featured animation sequences from Camp Chaos. As a fun extra, there are also two Easter eggs contained within the set. Without spoiling anything, the discovery of those gimmicks might require some knowledge on certain satanic numerology. *(ag)*

MEMORABILIA

It would take a (truly epic) book of its own to provide an accurate overview of the IRON MAIDEN merchandise which has accumulated over the course of more than four decades. Here, we limit ourselves to a few highlights that go beyond standard items, such as clothing and accessories, that have flooded the market in recent years – and which in some cases put a heavy strain on fan wallets.

PUZZLES

Thanks to the team from Zee Productions, love for some of the most iconic album covers in music history can be combined with the challenge of a puzzle. Next to many other bands from the fields of metal, punk, and rock, IRON MAIDEN is of course also represented among the sets of the "Rock Saws" series, which one might mistake for vinyl sleeves at first glance due to their smooth dimensions. In addition to "Live After Death", currently the first seven studio albums invite you to enjoy 500 pieces each, and there is also a doubly challenging version with 1,000 pieces for "The Number Of The Beast".

MODEL KITS

The connections between IRON MAIDEN and aviation are well-known and the implementation of aircraft models in band design is therefore practically mandatory. The renowned model construction company Revell also sees it this way, and in 2018 released the Spitfire Mk. II, famous from the performance of "Aces High" on the "Legacy Of The Beast" tour, in a scale of 1:32 (including two pilot Eddies). In 2016, Revell released the "Ed Force One" Boeing 747-400 in a scale of 1:144, whose real counterpart flew its last flight that year. KAV Models, on the other hand, enables model enthusiasts to bring the cover of "A Matter Of Life And Death" to (undead) life: in addition to Eddie as the tank commander, there are five other 1:35 soldiers to go into battle with him.

SKATE DECKS

At latest with the use of "Hallowed Be Thy Name" for the legendary video "Welcome To Hell" (1996) by skateboard company Toy Machine, it should have been clear to everyone that IRON MAIDEN can be perfectly grinded, shredded and slid. The eight wonderful decks of the "Heavy Metal Series" from 2014 combine the best of both worlds, on which seven classic album covers were immortalised in addition to a variation of the band logo. Anyone who can get hold of one of these noble parts somewhere can consider themselves more than lucky because of the limited number of boards.

ACTION FIGURES

The unmatched standard for quality and quantity when it comes to merchandise is of course set by the gentlemen of KISS, but at least when it comes to action figures, IRON MAIDEN. can be thought of as pioneers as well. The commercial temptations resulting from the graphic designs of the great Derek Riggs are simply too great for that. Accordingly, there are many ways to showcase the most famous band mascot in the world in the most varied of versions (or, depending on the degree of veneration, on the altar) – for older and out-of-print items, as always, fans have to dig a little deeper into their pockets.

There is no need to worry in this regard with the "Pop! Rocks" series of Funko Bobbleheads dedicated to IRON MAIDEN. The first wave includes a 3.75" tall Eddie from the covers of the first four studio albums, and in the case of "The Number Of The Beast", the little red devil is also included, as well it should be. All four figures are afforded a separately available display box, whereby their variations are given a "glow in the dark" effect as an exclusive gimmick.

IRON MAIDEN also found their way into the range of NECA, one of the world's best-known action figure manufacturers in 2005. Over the years, a good dozen nice sets from "Killers" to "Live After Death" to "The Final Frontier" have been released, some of which have already changed hands for three-digit sums. The 8" Pharaoh Eddie from "Powerslave" is the latest release that can (still) easily be transferred to your own collection at a regular price.

In the shape of the company Maiden Collectibles, IRON MAIDEN and their management have long been involved in the field of Eddies cast in plastic: In the slipstream of "Iron Maiden: Legacy of the Beast", figures inspired by the computer game emerged on the market, with the band mascot with a size of about 4", among other things as Vampire Hunter, Cyborg or Shaman. The statues in a 1:10 scale are correspondingly more expensive: while Eddie in the iconic trooper outfit is 11" tall, as a pharaoh he rises to a monumental 13" above normal mortals – and that in both a regular and a gold version. The ultimate challenge for collectors is the first wave of a total of twelve different minifigures from the game, which are available in blind boxes, thus increasing the tension when one unpacks them.

Fans of IRON MAIDEN (along with some other cult bands and franchises) will also find what they are looking for in the "ReAction" series by Super7. Not only did several studio albums and "Live After Death" serve as a source of inspiration, but so did individual songs such as "Aces High" and "Flight Of Icarus". To fuel the buying frenzy even more, blind boxes with unpredictable content are also available. No less than eight alternative variations of the 3.75" figures do their best to drive complete collectors crazy.

Another nice set of Eddie figures came with a series of CD digipaks that started in 2018 and presented remastered versions of the IRON MAIDEN studio works from "Iron Maiden" to "The Book Of Souls". Each batch consists of three consecutive albums, as a special bonus "The Number Of The Beast", "Somewhere In Time", "Fear Of The Dark" and "A Matter of Life And Death" are also available in a box along with a matching patch and Eddie in 1:24 scale. A fifth batch followed in 2020 to cover the live albums "Life After Death" and "Rock In Rio", with the former getting a boxed version as well.

The two Eddies created by McFarlane Toys have to be described as downright antique. The collectibles forged by "Spawn" creator Todd McFarlane, who in the 1990's was more or less solely responsible for a quantum leap within the industry in terms of detailed design, produced an action figure based on "Killers" and "The Trooper" with a size of 6" and the IRON MAIDEN lettering in the background. Depending on the state of preservation, the two are currently available for a higher double-digit amount. *(ag)*

epilogue: the legacy of the beast

Following the launch of the "Iron Maiden: Legacy of the Beast" free mobile game in 2016, IRON MAIDEN naturally took the excuse to go on tour to promote it, resulting in possibly their most ambitious and entertaining tour yet. Interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, and with the tour hopefully awaiting resumption in 2021, the boys haven't exactly been idle in the meanwhile ...

Dickinson published his long-awaited autobiography "What Does This Button Do?" on 19 October 2017. True to form, he wrote the memoir himself, foregoing a ghost writer and scribbling it out by hand across seven A4 notebooks while IRON MAIDEN toured "The Book Of Souls". "I physically wrote 180,000 words, and all of it was on WH Smith pads in actual handwriting, proper old-school," the Renaissance man proudly recounted. Interestingly, the book discusses IRON MAIDEN less than or in equal measure with various other notable episodes in his life – his childhood, his solo years, his love of aviation, and of course his victorious struggle over cancer. Dickinson then promptly embarked on a series of spoken word tours in more intimate venues, such as theatres and cinemas, across Europe in 2018 and 2019 – an IRON MAIDEN fanatic's wet dream to be sure, as this writer can attest. Dickinson regaled audiences with tales from across the polymath's life and acapella renderings of some of Maiden's most beloved songs.

Back in Maidenworld, IRON MAIDEN launched "Iron Maiden: Legacy of the Beast" in 2016, a free, mobile, turn-based RPG game set in the IRON MAIDEN universe with Eddie (obviously!) as the main character. This time, the band's long-held ambition of releasing a game as beloved as their music was a success. The game is eminently playable and a fun romp with Eddie through a world detailed exclusively with IRON MAIDEN canon, accompanied by an IRON MAIDEN soundtrack.

Naturally, the game and its success became a pretext to embark on yet another tour, but with a caveat. This would be IRON MAIDEN's greatest tour yet, properly celebrating their own legacy with arguably the best setlist and most phenomenal stage show of their career. Kicking off on 28 May 2018 and spanning 96 concerts across four continents so far while it awaits its conclusion pending the end to the Covid-19 pandemic. The tour was hailed as a spectacle of a lifetime. Featuring a huge WWII-era plane replica soaring over the stage during opener

Photos: Mika Häkälä

"Aces High", the stage set would transform continuously, from a military bunker to a stained-glass framed cathedral with chandeliers overhead, to a graveyard with rolling mist, to a faux-stone replica of Icarus taking to the air above a flamethrower-wielding Dickinson, and finally to an entrance to hell for the encore of "The Number Of The Beast". As if this wasn't enough, the setlist was the most diverse of the band's career, featuring everything from classics like "Flight Of Icarus" and "Revelations" to latter day live rarities like "For The Greater Good Of God", and incorporating Blaze Bayley-era classics "Sign Of The Cross" and "The Clansman" for the first time in almost 20 years.

Meanwhile, Steve Harris somehow found the time to record his sophomore effort with BRITISH LION, "The Burning", which was released on 20 January 2020. A vast improvement on the debut self-titled album and again sounding little like IRON MAIDEN. Galloping bass lines aside, the record is a classic hard rock effort with immense melodies and classy compositions with the additional bonus of being particularly well-produced. Adrian Smith, for his part, published his fishing memoir "Monsters Of River & Rock" in September 2020, a unique, delightful, and well-written account of Smith's greatest passion outside of music, also written while touring with "The Book Of Souls". The month before regrettably also saw former IRON MAIDEN producer Martin Birch, who had been instrumental to the band's sound and success from 1981 to 1992, tragically passed away.

Eager to satisfy the insatiable thirst of fans for more IRON MAIDEN during the immobilised year of 2020, the band announced their tenth (!) full-length live album, "Nights Of The Dead, Legacy Of The Beast: Live In Mexico City" for a 20 November 2020 release. Featuring over 100 minutes recorded across three sold-out arena shows in front of a 70,000+ crowd each night in Mexico City in September 2019, the album is available in three different formats, including triple vinyl. For inexplicable reasons the album will not be released on film however. "When the final leg of our 2020 'Legacy' tour this summer had to be cancelled due to the Covid pandemic, the whole band was very disappointed and deflated and we know our fans felt the same," Harris wrote in the announcement press release. "We'd been really looking forward to bringing the show to even more countries and although we've been able to reschedule most of our European-own shows for 2021, we thought we'd take a listen to the recordings from the tour so far and see if we could create a definitive live album souvenir that everyone, everywhere could enjoy ... We've never released a live album from Mexico before and we think this recording does justice to the passion and joy of our Mexican fans who always give us such a fantastic welcome whenever we play there."

So, what's next for the Beast that refuses to die? IRON MAIDEN producer Kevin Shirley hinted in a Facebook post at the end of 2019 that he had spent notable intervals of the first half of 2019 at the Guillaume Tell studio in Paris where he "spent ... three months working very hard on a an unnamed but not-very-secret project. I finished with a loud ringing in my ears." The statement appeared to corroborate sightings of various members of IRON MAIDEN in Paris within the same time frame. If that speculation is correct, that would suggest IRON MAIDEN already have a new studio album in the can and are waiting to release it at a time that would permit them to tour to promote it, and after completing the remaining "Legacy" dates. If that was the case, a new studio album would still be a long wait, but it is without a shadow of a doubt that the wait was worth it. In the meanwhile, we the fans look forward to the day when the Covid pandemic is under control, there is a new IRON MAIDEN album on the shelves, and the boys are readying themselves for another tour. That will be a happy day indeed. Up The Irons! (gl)

Photos: Mika Häkälä

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